Deng Xiaoping, portrait of the week by Bahgory 10



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OAU seeks solutions

EGYPTIAN Foreign Minister Amr Moussa expressed hope yesterday that the ministerial council of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) would work out "practical solutions" to the conflicts and problems plaguing the African continent, reports **Abdel-Wahed Abdel-Kader** from Tripoli. Moussa spoke to reporters only hours before OAU foreign ministers opened their 65th council in Tripoli, Libya, last night to grapple with the conflicts raging in the Great Lakes region of eastern Zaire, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan.

The issues of African refugees, African development and Arab-African cooperation are also on the agenda of the three-day conference. Asked about a European plan to establish a rapid deployment force for intervention in disastrous humanitarian situations south of the Mediterranean, Moussa said that "contacts are continuing between the concerned European countries and some North African Arab states, including Egypt, to put matters on course."

State terror

PALESTINIAN security services yesterday denounced the killing of a Palestinian by Israeli undercover soldiers. The shooting, in which three other Palestinians were wounded, took place on Tuesday evening in the village of Hizmeh, outside East Jerusalem.

Hizmeh, which is part of the Palestinian self-rule autonomy but has joint Israeli and Palestinian security control, was subsequently sealed off by Israeli forces.

A Palestinian statement said that soldiers wearing civilian clothes entered the home of a Palestinian without reason and "provoked and killed" Mohamed Abdel-Aziz Abu Alawi, a 55-year-old retiree who was not politically active.

Iranian poll

IRAN'S Interior Minister Ali Mohamed Besharati announced on state television on Tuesday that the country's presidential elections will be held on 23 May.

The May polls will elect a successor to President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, whose second four-year term ends this year. Iran's constitution does not allow a president to serve more than two terms.

So far, five candidates are in the running for the forthcoming elections. The most notable amongst them is conservative Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri.

Killer's note

A HANDWRITTEN note, released on Tuesday, was found on the body of Ali Hassan Abu Kamal, the 69-year-old Palestinian who shot seven tourists at the Empire State Building in New York this week before turning the gun on himself.

The incident left Abu Kamal and one sightseer dead, and six others wounded. The note, dated 1 January 1996 and signed by Abu Kamal, blamed Zionists for "turning our people, the Palestinians, homeless." It also said that those listed were his bitter enemies who must be "annihilated" and "exterminated."

New York police said they still believe Abu Kamal was a deranged man who acted alone.

INSIDE



A governmental decree to halt the demolition of an old villa signaled the state's commitment to preserve the national architectural heritage (see page 3) photo: Randa Shaath

Ready to explode

ISRAELI Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu warned the Palestinians yesterday that they will make a "grave mistake" if they respond with violence to Israel's plans to build a Jewish neighbourhood in disputed East Jerusalem.

Israel reinforced troops in Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank ahead of an expected cabinet approval of the construction of 6,500 apartments for Jews in the city's eastern sector, claimed by the Palestinians as a future capital.

Palestinian leaders said riots were likely should Israel go through with the plan. Faisal Husseini, the top PLO official in Jerusalem, said the tension in the city reminded him of the days leading up to the December 1987 outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada or uprising against Israeli occupation. "We are smelling the smell which was in the air just before the Intifada," Husseini said. "Everything is ready for an explosion."

Arab nations led a chorus of condemnation and the European Union also expressed concern about the plan and formally asked Israel not to build the Jewish district, known as Har Homa. An EU spokesman said a delegation of EU diplomats in Jerusalem had warned Israel that proceeding with the plan would be "very detrimental to the whole political atmosphere between Israelis and Palestinians."

In Brussels, Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo said "the European Union has constantly condemned the policy [of settlement] as it is in conflict with UN Security Council resolutions and presents a threat to peace."

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, speaking after a meeting with the Dutch diplomat, said the Oslo autonomy accords stipulate that Israel does not change the status of Palestinian territories, particularly East Jerusalem. "Not a single house is to be added" before the final status of Jerusalem is determined in talks scheduled to begin in mid-March, Arafat said.

The Arab League said on Monday it was "seriously concerned" about the move and charged that the goal was to "encircle the Arab part of Jerusalem with settlements."

The UN Security Council expressed concern on Tuesday over Israel's settlement policy in East Jerusalem. The council hoped "restraint and wisdom would prevail so as not to undo the peace process," the council president, Njuguna Mahugu of Kenya, told reporters.

Building momentum in Washington

On the eve of Mubarak's crucial visit to Washington, Egyptian officials vow unwavering support for the Palestinians. **Hoda Tewfik** reports from the US capital

As preparations continue for President Hosni Mubarak's upcoming visit to Washington, US officials say the Clinton administration is eager to build on the momentum generated by the Hebron agreement.

Administration officials believe that Egypt should continue to play a key role in promoting peace in the Middle East. This role will be at centre stage when Mubarak meets with President Clinton on 10 March at the White House.

Mubarak's trip was described as very timely, because it follows talks between Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and a visit by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on 3 March. Jordan's King Hussein is next in line and will be in the US capital one week after Mubarak.

In addition to peace-making issues, the Mubarak-Clinton talks will cover bilateral relations (commercial, economic and military), terrorism and regional stability.

Critical tasks lie ahead in the peace process: reviving the stalled talks between Israel and Syria and the opening next month of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations to determine the final status of the Occupied Territories.

A US administration official told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, "President Clinton is very anxious to see the parties build on the momentum of the recent agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis concerning Hebron."

Netanyahu's policy of expanding Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories still poses a serious threat to the peace-making effort. An Egyptian diplomat told the *Weekly* the issue of the Jewish settlements will be high on Mubarak's agenda during his talks with Clinton. Mubarak said recently that "settlements are the most difficult problem on the Palestinian track because it is an issue that can cause a deadlock."

An US official, outlining the administration's approach to Mubarak's visit, said: "We want to discuss with President Mubarak where we go from here and hear from this influential leader his vision on how to move. The administration does not minimise the difficulty of the problems ahead, which are embedded in the process itself."

Asked what the Americans expected from Egypt, the official said: "We need Egypt to be supportive to the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and not complicate this model of peace."

The administration official appeared to be echoing the words of Netanyahu who recently claimed that Egypt tied Arafat's hands, preventing him from signing the Hebron agreement weeks ago.

"This is utter nonsense," said Egyptian ambassador Ahmed Maher. "Egypt does not force decisions on the Palestinians. They made their own decision when they accepted and signed the Hebron protocol."

The anti-Egyptian campaign, led by the Jewish lobby, is obviously aimed at curtailing the Egyptian role in helping the Palestinians regain their rights and establish their own state. Some senators and congressmen joined the campaign which Israel hopes will force the Palestinians to make concessions in the final status negotiations.

"We are consistent in our position of helping the Palestinians," the Egyptian Ambassador insisted. "Egypt will never press the Palestinians to make concessions; it is not in our interest to do so."

Senior Egyptian officials are now busy making preparations for Mubarak's visit. Foreign Minister Amr Moussa will meet with Albright on 7 March and also with Samuel Berger, national security adviser. Ambassador Nabil Fahmi is presently in town discussing the peace process with Dennis Ross, America's Middle East envoy, and his aides.

Mubarak will meet with the Egyptian-American Presidents' Council to explore new spheres for American investments in Egypt and Moussa will travel to New York to address a conference organised by the Egyptian-American Chamber of Commerce on investment opportunities.

The chamber's chairman, Mohamed Shafik Gabr, who is currently leading a "knock-door" visit of Egyptian businessmen, in advance of Mubarak's trip, said next year will witness a remarkable increase in the volume of American investments in Egypt.

Draining out the poison

Could Islam and the West join forces for the sake of humanity or is mutual antagonism inevitable? A group of Islamic studies scholars sought an answer at a recent conference in Cairo. **Omayma Abdel-Latif** attended

There are those who believe, rather stubbornly, that in a post-Cold War world, global politics will be "reconfigured along cultural lines," thus making a confrontation between cultures inevitable.

However, at the 19th international conference held by the London-based 21st Century Trust with the theme "The West and Islam. Clashpoint and Dialogue", participants, in spite of their diverse cultural and intellectual backgrounds, sought to lay down the foundation for a new cultural and political reality: that of dialogue, rather than confrontation, between Islamic and Western societies.

Discussions at the six-day gathering focused primarily on issues that triggered controversy in the West, such as the pains of modernisation; prospects of democracy in both the Western and Muslim worlds; religion and the state; and the danger of a confrontation between Islam and the West and how it can be avoided.

The discussions held on the fringe of the conference, however, proved to be equally inspiring. Issues like what Islam says on homosexuality and how the would-be Islamic state deals with human rights, women and minorities were hotly debated by the participants.

"The world has been swept by an Islamophobia and it is time to set the record straight as to how both Islam and the West can avoid a clashpoint and initiate a dialogue," said Edward Mortimer of the *Financial Times* and chairman of the conference.

However, on many a topic, the conferees failed to bridge the cultural gaps. For example, in one of the study groups assigned to explore how the West can benefit from Islam as a social and political system, one member drew the conclusion that "there was nothing the West can learn from Islam in terms of freedom of expression and human rights." However, another member suggested that the best domains where both the West and Islam can come together was "getting back to family values and raising the standards of morality which are on the decline in many Western societies."

One of the issues which triggered controversy was how Muslim scholars perceive a would-be Islamic state. Prof. Bashir Nafaie of the Middle Eastern department of the UK's Reading University, argued that the quest for power through violence pursued by some Islamic fundamentalist movements goes against the concept of a model Islamic state.

"The interpretation of Islamic history in its heydays shows that very little authority was given to the ruler or sultan and that it was the civil society (*Ummah*) and the *Ulema* (scholars) who had the upper hand in managing everyday life activity. And yet most Islamic movements give absolute priority to seizing power rather than winning over civil society," Nafaie explained.

Some Western scholars expressed concern over the possible establishment of an Islamic state. As one speaker put it, "The West has difficulties understanding this part of Islam because we cannot figure out how the *ulema* system can function from the perspective of Western democracy," said Martin Lau, a German lecturer on Islamic law at the London School of Economics (LSE).

Another issue which was the subject of fiery debate was the status of women and the family under Islamic rule. Some participants went as far as to raise such questions as: is there gender in heaven? and how does Islam deal with minorities like homosexuals?

Dissatisfied with the course of the discussions, some Muslim scholars expressed concern over the language of the dialogue itself. "The main flaw in this conference and, more generally in the dialogue between Islam and the West, is the steadfast and unbridgeable refusal — on the part of the West — to accept at least on the level of ideas and theory, that there could be another paradigm for social and political development not based on rejection of religion but rather on embracing it," said *Nadr Hashimie of Carlton University, Canada.*

As to the alleged Islamic threat, Prof. John Kean, head of the Centre for the Study of Democracy at Westminster University, said that "the myth of an Islamic threat is like the myths of legitimacy and nationalism."

"Part of the rhetorical baggage of political struggle is employed by those who wish to remain in power and those who aspire to attain it. As long as such interests exist, myths will continue to legitimise and acquire a life of their own," Kean told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

One Western scholar said that the West's understanding of Islam has been hijacked by the extreme and the superficial, but added that Muslims are to bear much of the blame for this. "Some have preferred to pander to the ignorance and hysteria of antagonists in East-West relations, be they political, economic or cultural relations. It is not a clash of civilisations or cultures but rather a misunderstanding on both sides," he said.

A group of Islamic intellectuals suggested what was dubbed as the new Islamic discourse whose features were mentioned in the papers submitted by both Prof. Abdel-Wahab Elmessiri and Prof. Ahmet Davutoglu of Istanbul University.

They suggested a 'Homo Islamicus' instead of a 'Homo Occidentalis'. The Occident views Western Europe and North America as the centre and prime mover of the world but the Islamic approach suggests that there is no centre-periphery differentiation on earth in the sense of a *prime mover*. *The Homo Occidentalis* also suggests that some are more equal than others. The Islamic approach, however, says that man is equal to man and that there should be no discrimination which may destroy the centrality of belief in spiritual cosmology.

On the issue of confrontation, which was addressed in the conference's final session, some Western scholars played down the notion of a possible clash of civilisations as suggested by academics like Huntington. But some Islamic scholars expressed fears that there is more than an element of truth in what Huntington wrote about a clash of civilisations.

One of the recommendations adopted at the final session was that neither Islam nor the West can afford to distance themselves from a common effort spanning class, cultures and religions. And as one participant put it, "we cannot afford to revive the territorial and political confrontation of the past and should work harder to drain out any poison between Islam and the West. The further down that road we can travel, the better the world that we *shall create for future generations*."

Editor - in - Chief Dr. Taha Abdel - Alim

Chairman of the Board Ibrahim Nafie



THE US Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) director Louis J Freeh ended a three-day visit to Cairo on Sunday. During his stay, Freeh met President Hosni Mubarak and inaugurated an FBI office in the capital, with the purpose of promoting cooperation between American and Egyptian investigators. The first FBI director to visit Egypt, Freeh told reporters that the opening of a Cairo office was an extension of the good relationship between the FBI and Egyptian security officials.

"We have very good liaison relations with our police counterparts...We want to continue our good liaison with Egypt, particularly in the counter-terrorism area," he said. "We have a global economy and, therefore, global crime, and for these reasons in particular police have to work together. This [office] is another development in a relationship that is many years old."

A US Embassy official told **Amira Howeidy** that the Cairo office "is not for investigation or espionage," but to enable Egypt and the United States to coordinate their investigations of international crime. "The world has become so small, with so much electronic commerce going on with bank transfers, which is one area in which Egypt and the US can work together," the official said. The new office, the official added, is headed by Al Finish "who is not a policeman. He does not make arrests but will do purely liaison work with Egyptian police authorities."

On Tuesday, Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi told reporters that the FBI presence would not impinge on Egyptian sovereignty. "Members of this office don't have the right to go to the scene of events, to carry out investigations or arrest people," El-Alfi said. The bureau's function, he added, "is to exchange information and to cooperate with the Egyptian authorities... to handle crimes of violence, fraud and counterfeiting."

Three more years of emergency

A state of emergency, in force since Anwar El-Sadat's assassination in 1981, has been extended by the People's Assembly for three more years. **Gamal Essam El-Din** reports

The People's Assembly has approved a presidential decree extending the state of emergency, in force since the assassination of President Anwar El-Sadat in 1981, for three more years. Only a tiny minority of MPs voted against the decree.

The state of emergency, which gives the security forces sweeping powers to detain suspects without trial for long periods, had previously been extended on a year-by-year basis. But in April 1994, it was given a three-year extension on the government's request, despite strong objections from opposition parties.

The presidential decree was submitted to the Assembly on Sunday morning, and Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri addressed the house to explain the government's reasons for the extension. A general parliamentary committee then met to discuss the decree and El-Ganzouri's statement, approving both in around 10 minutes. The meeting was attended by Speaker Fathi Sorour, Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi, Kamal El-Shazli, minister of state for parliamentary affairs, and chairpersons of the Assembly's 18 committees.

The Assembly reconvened in a plenary session on Sunday evening and approved the decree by an overwhelming majority — only 12 opposition deputies objected.

Explaining the reasons for the extension to the house, El-Ganzouri said that the purpose of the state of emergency was to protect Egypt's economic resources against terrorism "which is sponsored by international forces trying to strike at Egypt's investment climate and tourism." According to the prime minister, terrorist violence re-erupted following the success of last November's Middle East/North Africa economic conference, when investors reacted positively to Egypt's investment climate.

El-Ganzouri cited the recent killing of 12 Coptic Christians by militants in southern Egypt as evidence that terrorism was bent on destroying that investment climate and "conveying to the world the message that Christian investments will not be secure in Egypt."

"The international powers which sponsor terrorism are doing their best to keep us wholly dependent on them for food and to make us pay a heavy political price for this," El-Ganzouri continued. "These nations, which have become thriving havens for terrorists, themselves take harsh measures to ensure that the terrorism which they sponsor will not affect them negatively." He cited anti-terrorist laws in the United States, Britain, Germany, Italy and Japan.

El-Ganzouri vowed that the application of the emergency law would not be at the expense of freedom of expression, reminding the house of a series of laws passed by the Assembly last year allowing greater freedom of the press and protecting intellectuals against lawsuits filed by Islamist extremists with the intention of intimidating them into silence.

"Let me emphasise again that this law is not meant to restrict freedoms but to protect the Egyptian economy," he said. "In the coming few years, Egypt will need investments valued at LE100 billion per year to achieve an annual growth rate of seven per cent."

A report by the Assembly's general committee noted that the President of the Republic is empowered by the Constitution to extend the state of emergency for further periods. The state of emergency, the report said, makes it possible for the police and security forces to take the initiative, and gives them greater flexibility, to pre-empt and foil acts of terrorism.

While the security forces have generally been successful in confronting terrorism, it would nevertheless be unwise to lift the emergency at a time when the nation is in an economic boom and terrorists are doing their best to undermine national stability, the report stated, citing the recent shooting of Copts in Upper Egypt: "The Assembly's general committee had hoped that the conditions justifying the emergency would have ended before the time came for a further extension, but terrorist acts have re-surfaced recently and led to the killing of innocent citizens as they worshipped God."

In the low-key debate that followed, majority deputies of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) predictably expressed their support for the extension. Majority leader Ahmed Abu Zeid said he was backing it because El-Ganzouri had given his personal word that the emergency would not be used arbitrarily against citizens or to muzzle freedoms. "We have confidence in the prime minister," he said.

According to Abu Zeid, the killing of the 12 Copts in the Upper Egyptian town of Abu Qurqas had been intended to convey a message to Europeans and Americans, ahead of President Mubarak's visit to the United States, that Egypt is rife with terrorism and that "you should not invest there."

In contrast to NDP deputies, opposition MPs maintained that civic freedoms had suffered under the emergency. El-Badri Farghali, speaking for the leftist Tagammu Party, said: "The Tagammu cannot approve a law that is in opposition to the freedom of citizens." Other nations, he added, fought terrorism with democracy and social justice.

"Yes, we are fully aware of the dangers which black fascism poses to the civilisation of this country, but it is the Egyptian people who pay the heavy price of terrorism. We cannot place our trust in personal promises. The government should state clearly that the application of this law will be confined to criminal and political terrorism," Farghali said.

Ali Fath El-Bab, the sole representative of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, said El-Ganzouri's statement did not contain any figures or statistics which could be cited to justify the extension of the emergency. He argued that contrary to the government's belief that the emergency would attract investors, it would instead scare them away. "I emphasise that this type of law is used abroad to give a bad name to the economic conditions and the security situation in this country and thus frighten away investors," he said. "Moreover, this law is viewed by the world community as a dangerous threat to freedom and human rights."

According to Fath El-Bab, who was stripped of his parliamentary immunity earlier this month, the emergency had not been successful in fighting terrorism, and the nation had become rife with corruption and shady financial practices. He urged the government to search for the true reasons behind the surge in terrorism and other "neurotic" phenomena such as "devil worship."

Fouad Badrawi, speaking for the liberal Wafd Party, said the emergency law should be invoked "in exceptional cases only. Once these conditions end, it should be repealed. But prolonging the emergency in this way means that we will remain captive to emergency conditions until further notice. Other nations suffering from terrorism and extremism have been able to achieve economic prosperity without applying emergency laws."

Sameh Ashour, the sole representative of the Nasserist Party, also argued that the emergency law "is not the right tool for fighting terrorism." He instead recommended a "serious government effort" to promote democracy and meet the needs of the deprived majority.

Anti-terrorism 'contact-point' to be set up

An international seminar on terrorism organised by Al-Ahram decided to establish a non-governmental research centre to serve as a database in the war against the phenomenon of political extremist violence. **Jailan Halawi** reports

After 20 hours of discussions spanning three days this week, representatives of 26 countries taking part in Al-Ahram's International Seminar on Terrorism recommended that regional and international cooperation in the war against the worldwide phenomenon should be stepped up. Towards this objective, the seminar decided to establish an International Centre for Combating Terrorism, described as a non-governmental organisation that will conduct studies on terrorism in all countries and serve as a database in the war against militant violence. A tentative decision to establish this centre had been taken at a meeting of a preparatory committee last May.

The centre, which will begin operating in two months, will also serve as a "contact point" between individuals, national, regional and international organisations wishing to contribute to the anti-terrorism campaign. Cairo will serve as the centre's headquarters and branches will be opened in other countries.

A committee supervising the establishment of this centre will be chaired by India's Gen. [retr'd] Ved Marwah, assisted by two deputies, Egypt's Moufid Shehab and Russia's Gela Pataraya. The committee's secretary-general will be Egypt's Mahmoud Mourad, assisted by four deputies: Turkey's Ecvet Tezcan, Greece's Alexander Cudsi, Libya's Melood Al-Mohzabi and Egypt's Nabil Helmi. From his office at Al-Ahram, Mahmoud Mourad will serve as a liaison between all those involved.

A concluding statement issued by the seminar addressed various aspects of terrorism which had been the subject of debate. The statement defined terrorism as a violent crime that has various forms and aims, drawing a distinction between a terrorist crime and the legitimate right to resist military occupation. Terrorism violated human and national rights because it denied individuals the right to a stable and secure life and denied nations the right to achieve socio-economic development, the statement said. It was also described as a crime against religions, civilisations and beliefs that must be fought using all possible tools and means, on the domestic and international levels, in order to protect human rights and international legality.

The participants said that terrorism, as a form of violent crime, should not be considered as related to any form of thought. They urged intellectuals and academics, governmental and non-governmental organisations to take the initiative in fighting this "fascist phenomenon" by correcting misconceptions and promoting mainstream beliefs, thought and culture.

Terrorism and organised crime were two sides of the same coin, the statement asserted in its fourth point. The connection between the two was organic and ongoing because they shared common interests, which "has led to co-ordination, the merging of duties and the exchange of roles." There was evidence of "clear cooperation" between terrorist groups, arms smugglers, money counterfeiters, vice networks and drug traffickers, all of which "heralds the emergence of a new type of Mafia that possesses arms and money as well as the means and tools of terror."

Noting that the evolving world order was likely to be based on democracy, pluralism, respect for human rights, particularly the right to life, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the statement argued that "the foundations of the world order are in direct opposition to terrorism, which aims at muzzling democracy and denying human rights."

The participants emphasised justice and people's right to self-determination and to shape their future in peace and stability. They urged the world community to work to guarantee this right to every person and to all peoples, monitoring and combating any violators "who are the world order's worst enemy."

Regional and international cooperation was vital in the war against terrorism, the statement said. Combating terrorism on the national level would continue to have only partial success, because of the phenomenon's international dimension. It warned of dire consequences if bilateral, regional and international cooperation was neglected.

Noting that the current era was characterised by the emergence of blocs along economic lines, the statement suggested that provisions for the combating of terrorism should be included among the principal provisions governing the establishment of such blocs. The participants also called for an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to draw up an agreement on combating terrorism and to establish a special mechanism for this purpose.

One of the most important tools of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in fighting terrorism, the statement said, would be to deny terrorists political asylum in other countries. Other important tools on the international level are the denial of opportunities for para-military training and the propagation of terrorist ideology, and the cutting off of financial resources.

The statement praised the positive role played by the media in studying, analysing and scrutinising the phenomenon of terrorism. But it also warned that "exaggerated" coverage of terrorism and the accompanying, if unintentional, propagation of its ideology served one of the principal aims of terrorism, which was to use the media for terrorising the people. It advised the media to "simply report the facts accurately and continue playing its role in combating this danger by every means," and urged decision-makers and authorities to make information on terrorism available at the right time, in order to "clarify the picture and fill a vacuum that might be abused by others."

The participants also urged the UN to establish an international fund to assist the victims of terrorism, treating them on the same basis as the victims of natural disasters.

Taking on the Nile

During the Cairo Nile conference, donors underscored Nile Basin countries' collective control of water management. **Gamal Nkrumah** reports

The Nile is one small arm of a vast sea of international water politics. At the recent Cairo Nile conference, a serious attempt was made to alleviate the fears of upstream Nile Basin countries concerning the over-utilisation of the river's water by downstream nations.

Managing the water resources of the riparian states often presents a diplomatic quandary for the 10 Nile Basin countries — Burundi, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire. The armed insurgencies and civil wars raging across the region puncture foreign investors' confidence. At the fifth meeting of the Council of Ministers for Nile Basin Countries, held from 20-23 February in Cairo, ministers and high-ranking officials presented their viewpoints eloquently, but it was clear that the World Bank and other donor representatives called the shots.

David Grey, World Bank senior water resources management specialist, was the main attraction and ministers surrounded him like bees buzzing about a fragrant fruit tree's flowers.

"The Bank is currently funding projects from the International Development Association [IDA] in most of the riparian countries. These are country projects. Most of these projects have a strong capacity-building component. They strengthen the capacity to manage water resources in individual riparian countries which, in turn, is a very important element in achieving joint management among the riparian countries," Grey said.

Grey expressed his pleasure "in seeing the achievements to date, particularly over the last 12 months — on the movement co-operative framework, on the establishment of the panel of expert meetings in Kampala last month and again in Cairo this month. We see that as a measure of the commitment of the riparian states," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Donors want recipients to get their act together to solve regional problems. The rich and powerful nations of the North don't particularly want to be bothered with speaking to tens of tiny countries with inconsequential agendas. Irrespective of the competing interests within the North, the G7 invariably present themselves as a united front in the international arena. Can the Nile Basin countries do likewise?

Khartoum registers regular complaints that a 1959 agreement between Egypt and Sudan is unfair. Cairo defends its position, arguing that Egypt uses 100 per cent of its allotment according to the 1959 agreement — three times Sudan's — while Sudan does not use even half of its share. Donors aired grave concern about the tensions.

Observers believe that with the new Southern Valley project well under way in Upper Egypt, and with Ethiopia showing increasing interest in constructing dams for irrigation and hydro-electricity, the stage is set for a confrontation. Egypt, the most highly industrialised and urbanised of the Nile Basin nations, consumes the largest share of Nile water. In the early 1960s, preliminary ideas about constructing some 40 dams in Ethiopia were first mooted. The United States Bureau of Reclamation recommended the Ethiopian dam construction scheme and the idea was again updated by the Russians in the 1970s. But, the designs were always sent back to the drawing board.

The Cairo meeting, like previous ones, stressed the recurrent theme of increasing water yield from Upper Nile Basin. Most of the Nile Basin countries are poor and underdeveloped. Youssef Wali, deputy prime minister and minister of agriculture represented Egypt at the meeting. Egypt's priority is to maintain a regular water supply. The proposed Jonglei Canal will increase the water supply. The reclamation of the marshy Sudd region of southern Sudan will increase the White Nile's water yield. But many environmentalist groups and donor agencies feel that draining the swamps of the Sudd will create an environmental catastrophe. There is a lot of popular concern in Egypt about Ethiopia's plans to construct dams for hydro-electricity. But these fears are unfounded, argues Ali Mohamed Shadi of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Ethiopia relies primarily on rainfall for its agriculture and the dams are envisaged to be used mainly for hydro-electricity generation.

"So-called water-rich Nile Basin countries, like Ethiopia, are actually water-deficient," Shady told the *Weekly*. Kenya's Minister of Water Resources Simeon Nyachea agreed. "We must rationalise our methods of water utilisation and avoid waste because water is scarce throughout the region," Nyachea said. Wasting the region's water is environmentally disastrous. "About 10 billion cubic metres per year are lost through evaporation in Lake Nasser," Shady told the *Weekly*. "Some 101 billion cubic metres are lost annually from Lake Victoria," he added.

News analysis

Rival interests, rival strategies

To counter foreign security projects for the Africa-Middle East region, Egypt has evolved its own security strategy, writes **Galal Nassar**

A statement to the People's Assembly Committee for Defence and National Security on Egypt's future defence strategy by Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, commander-in-chief of the armed forces and minister of defence and military production, has come at a critical stage in the formulation of Egypt's policies for the region.

According to Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, in a speech at the Book Fair last month, the Middle East is currently threatened by "alarming schemes, which call for our greatest vigilance." His words suggest that Egypt is in the process of reviewing the regional situation in terms of the security projects currently being launched by the great powers.

This subject pervaded Tantawi's recent statement to the defence committee, and his speech to a seminar for raising the awareness of military commanders last Thursday. He told the seminar: "Egypt's military forces are intensifying their efforts to develop their capabilities, modernise their equipment and establish highly trained cadres with the highest level of skill in combat..."

He has also mentioned in remarks to reporters that despite the peace process, with its possibilities for a lasting solution to regional conflict, the armed forces are nevertheless focusing on the analysis of potential threats to national security in order to provide military options to address such threats if necessary. The armed forces, he explained, were undergoing intensive training to counter both conventional weapons and the enemy's weapons of mass destruction. Any country which possesses such weapons, he said, automatically gives an open invitation to its neighbours to stockpile non-conventional and highly advanced weapons.

It is against this backdrop that the great leap in the training of the Egyptian armed forces has taken place. Joint training exercises began in the early 1980s and have since been expanded to include training with US, British, French and Italian forces, as well as troops from Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates.

Egypt believes that in addition to benefiting the troops in the field, military training can have a considerable impact at the diplomatic, political and economic levels. Joint training also reflects the extent to which Egypt's interlinked political and military strategy is concerned with possible schemes operating in the region. The training partners mentioned above add various dimensions to Egypt's strategic strengths.

The discussion of regional policy inevitably prompts an exploration of proposals which link Middle Eastern security with that of neighbouring regions (the Mediterranean and African regions in general, and Central Africa or the Great Lakes region in particular).

Egyptian diplomacy is doing its best to propagate its conviction that the proposals, on the whole, are inadequate to address the security challenges in the Middle East for the benefit of the parties involved. Rather, they serve special interests seeking hegemony and the establishment of systems which disregard the interests of the regional countries primarily concerned.

An informed source told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the special interests transcend Arab and Egyptian national security, and in fact put burdens on the latter in the Middle East and Africa. While Egypt's viewpoint is close to that of France, it differs widely from the position of other parties, particularly the US, Britain, Russia, and Canada which had suggested proposals for regional security that have all been rejected by Egypt. Egypt's analysis of the situation in the region shows that there is some sort of struggle in progress between the powers, to win control of the game by taking all the cards in areas of strategic interest to Egypt. An obvious example is the situation in eastern Zaire, where the US is striving to uproot French influence and interests in the Great Lakes region. The two-pronged US policy aimed at undermining French influence is at the same time a direct threat to Egypt's national security at the source of the Nile.

An in-depth examination of the proposals reveals that despite their apparent difference, they inject new dimensions into the conventional strategies for the region. Thus they include the African, Middle Eastern, Arab and Mediterranean dimensions, sometimes in a single project. This in itself allows Egypt to play an unlimited role because of its central position.

Aware that the Middle East is in a critical stage in political and security terms, and that any political, economic or security proposal would be accepted if based on sound historical premises that the Middle East is — historically, geographically and culturally — Arab, Egypt drew its security project for regional cooperation.

The source denied that the Egyptian project is a return to the age of alliances and axes which would precipitate further tensions and conflict of interests in the region. The proposal stresses Egypt's Arab and regional role, and rejects the assertion that Egypt is a Middle Eastern country or a small state. He explained that Egypt would allow no state to determine its role, undermine it, or define the scope of its influence.

The project defines the aim of Egypt's military might as being the maintenance of security and stability in the region, and the protection of its territory and supreme interest. The dimensions of such interests have been spelled out by Field Marshal Tantawi, in his address to the Committee for National Security to be African and Middle Eastern, in addition to the security dimension in the Red Sea and Arab Gulf.

Egypt's security position may be defined in a number of prerequisites (which are not open for procrastination or compromise) which must be met for Egypt to cooperate in any of the regional security projects. The prerequisites may be summarised as follows:

— Any scenario for security in the Middle East must emanate from the region and cater to its needs, current conditions and the future of the region, without any manipulation or hegemony.

— No regional security project can succeed unless the concept of equality is established, which means realising quantitative and qualitative balance in terms of military might in the region, and the elimination of the concept that the Arabs are a single bloc versus Israel.

— Rejection of the concept of military superiority, or the exception of certain weapons or certain states in the application of arms control, evidently meaning Israel.

— Ending the monopolisation of nuclear power by a single state in the region and the refusal of any endeavour to enter into any security arrangement in the region or to venture into negotiations while one party possesses weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear. This position is meant to counter the US proposal to resume multilateral negotiations which had been stalled for some time, particularly in the arms control committee.

— Rejection of any proposals which take account of structural weakness such as the smallness of a population or the national territory.

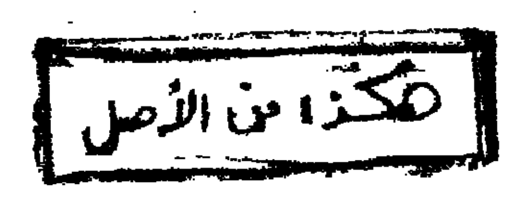
— Arms control should proceed in confidence-building stages, each stage leading to next to prove good will.

— To focus on the objective of eliminating weapons of mass destruction from the region as a prelude to the initiation of an arms control stage, and the rejection of attempts to include conventional weapons prematurely.

— A comprehensive and just settlement on all tracks must precede the conclusion of any arms control agreements in a bid to create an atmosphere of confidence, and to reject any confidence-building procedures prior to the settlement.

— Agreement must be reached on the sources regarded as constituting a common threat to the region.

In view of the above considerations, the visit of President Mubarak to Washington in March will have a far-reaching effect in crystallising the Egyptian project. The fact that the premises for security in the region will be widely discussed in Washington will add to the significance of the visit. Meetings have been continuously held by the prime minister, ministers, and top officials to prepare for the visit. The political assistant of the foreign minister will be in Washington one week before the president's arrival to consult and coordinate with Ambassador Ahmed Maher and Aßmbassador Nabil El-Arabi in setting the stage for the negotiations. The Foreign Ministry will table the premises, monitor the discussions and assess reactions, drawing on further inputs from a compendium of reports provided by the Egyptian national security authorities.



Euro envoy backs Copenhagen

The Copenhagen Declaration and the peace process were the subject of heated debate this week between the EU's Envoy to the Middle East and members of Al-Ahram's Centre for Political and Strategic Studies. **Aziza Sami** attended

In a closed session with members of Al-Ahram's Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, the European Union's envoy to the Middle East, Miguel Moratinos, criticised what he described as the reticence of Arab and Egyptian intellectuals, urging them to take on what he called an "avant-garde" and more positive role in the peace process.

The meeting, the first of its kind, included two protagonists of the Copenhagen Declaration, the Centre's director Abdel-Moneim Said, who had signed the document last month, as well as writer Mohamed Sid-Ahmed who had strongly opposed it. Moratinos had attended its signing last January.

Moratinos noted that Egyptian intellectuals were divided among themselves over the Copenhagen Declaration, and asked why they were trying to influence the democratically-elected Palestinian National Authority which could have other view-points.

Despite the right-wing Likud party's advent to power, the peace process is not, as most Arab countries claim, "completely dead" said Moratinos.

He added, "Now is the time for Egyptian and Arab intellectuals to face their Israeli counterparts with dialogue, and interact with the outside world, rather than be closed from within. The role of intellectuals is to look outward — to use an old-fashioned term, they have to take on an 'avant-garde' role."

Moratinos said that he had extensive diplomatic experience in the Middle East and that he was an admirer of intellectuals like Mahmoud Darwish and Mohamed Abed Al-Gabiri. He wondered why Arab intellectuals were "afraid of dealing with Israeli public opinion." He added, "If you want real peace, you have to deal with Israeli public opinion."

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed said that he was not against dialogue, but that he opposed the adoption by intellectuals of the role of negotiator. "There is a fundamental difference between the role of negotiator and that of intellectual," said Sid-Ahmed. "For the former, the aim of gaining political objectives is legitimate, whereas for the latter it is not, especially when the meaning of peace itself not clear. An event like the Copenhagen Declaration therefore has backfired," said Sid-Ahmed. "The main concern of intellectuals should be to highlight loopholes in the process."

Djaa Rashwan responded to Moratinos' claim that Egyptian intellectuals are divided by saying that all "civil organisations in Egyptian society have chosen to boycott Israel." He said that "there is no contradiction between the position of intellectuals and public opinion."

On whether it was intellectuals' role to promote the peace process Rashwan said that "the role of Arab intellectuals is closer to that of the Europeans, rather than the Americans, because Egyptian intellectuals do not perceive themselves as 'think-tanks' for the government, that is, they are not part of the establishment."

Moratinos said that Palestinians' "right to return" to their homeland is currently being discussed in negotiations.

He added that the fact that democratically elected civil institutions in Egypt opposed intellectuals' dialogue with Israel does not mean that there should be no dissenting views on this issue.

He urged "patience" in handling the peace process, saying it is "not completely dead" as many Arab parties claim. Progress on this front has to be gradual and incremental, he said.

Matters should be judged "by deeds and not words" said Moratinos, adding that Netanyahu had proved himself pragmatic despite his words, taking positive steps such as the freeing of political prisoners, and allowing more Palestinians to work inside Israel, where more than 100,000 Palestinians currently live. These viewpoints, stressed Moratinos, did not mean that he was a "Likudist". He said that the Hebron agreement was very positive, because of concessions made on the part of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, and because the Palestinians did not give up any of their basic demands.

He said that Egypt had a responsibility towards peace, ever since it assumed a leading role in the Camp David peace process. Egypt's key role in the Arab world as well does not mean it should forget its obligations, in the Mediterranean region, and the challenges posed by modernisation. What is needed, said Moratinos, is "a healthy, modern Egypt".

Despite the EU's exclusion from the peace process at its start, said Moratinos, it was now directly involved in negotiations on the Syrian track where he had personally been involved in contacts between Syrian President Hafez El-Assad and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

Commenting on this, Centre deputy director Mohamed El-Sayed Said said that it seemed to him that the Europeans, although now allowed a more positive role in the process by the Americans and Israelis, seem to "want to prove their innocence of charges of pro-Arab bias, (levelled against them by the Israelis) and so, have attempted to become flexible in accommodating all parties. Their role, therefore, remains minimal, and their direct involvement in negotiations is not much different from their exclusion from the process."

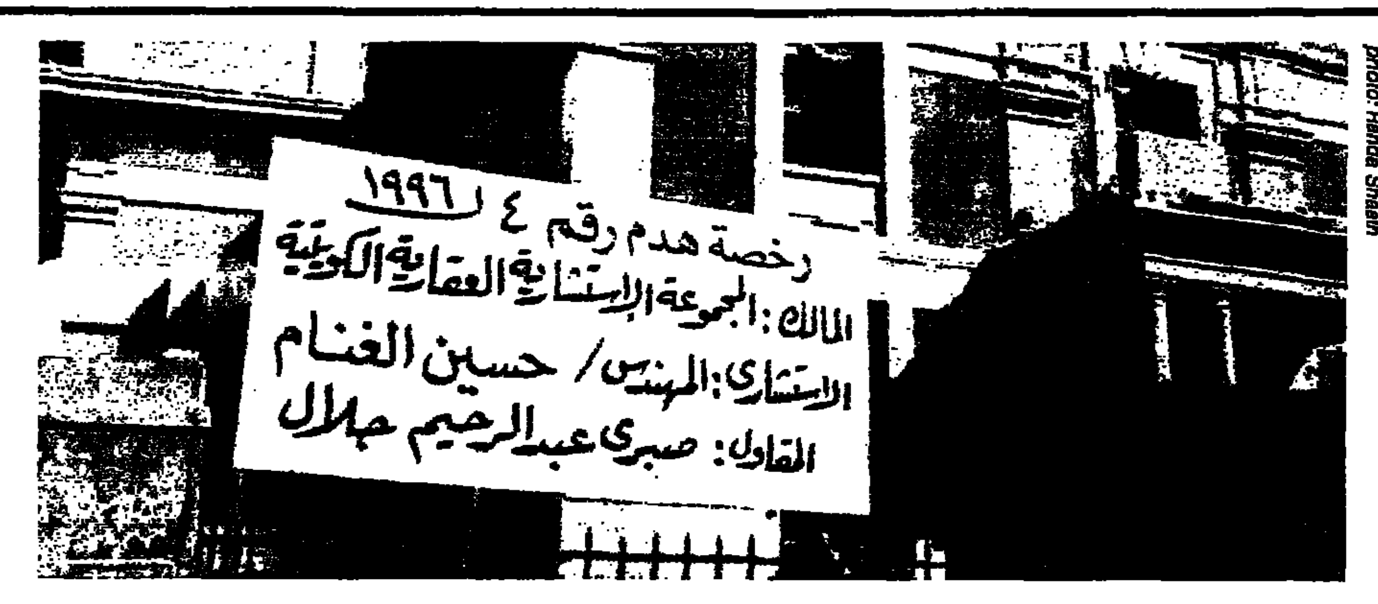


photo: Randa Shaath

Before it's too late

The intervention of the prime minister to stop the demolition of a villa in Giza underlined the need for government commitment to the preservation of the city's architectural heritage. **Dina Ezzat** reports

The deserted villa of Mohamed Sobehi on El-Nil Street in Giza has long stood as a testimony to the style and skill of its architect and craftsmen. Together with the nearby Ahmed Shawqi Museum and some other outstanding buildings in the neighbourhood, this two-storey villa offered the passer-by a view of the various styles of architecture current in the early years of the century.

Last month, it looked as though this villa would suffer the same fate that has befallen many of Cairo's older buildings. The land investment and construction company which owns the site moved in and began the process of demolition, quickly stripping the villa of its decorative, eclectic facades and elegant windowframes, and leaving it with the appearance of having been hit by a strong earthquake.

However, in this case, the demolition was stopped. "As soon as the prime minister was informed about it, he issued an immediate decree to stop the demolition," said a press spokesman from Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri's office. The prime minister was notified of the demolition by various sources, the spokesman said: "There are committees in charge of reporting [to the prime minister] on the state of affairs and the problems faced by the people. Also some individuals contacted the office to inform us about the destruction that was going on."

Earlier this week, the governor of Giza, Abdel-Rehim Shihata, headed a large group of security officers and municipality officials who went to the site to serve the decree and ensure that it was implemented.

"There was a big fuss. So many people were here. So many police cars. They took away the masons who were demolishing the villa and sealed the gates to the building," recalled one eye witness, who asked that her name be withheld.

But atop of the villa's surviving metal fence stands a huge placard that carries the name of the construction company which bought the building from the heirs of Mohamed Sobehi years ago, together with the number of the permit allowing them to demolish the villa.

The company's representatives say that they have not acted illegally and insist that they had a valid permit from the Giza municipality office allowing the demolition.

In a telephone interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, the chairman of the Giza municipality office Zein El-Abeddin Adam admitted that his department had issued the permit at the request of the building's owners.

The issuing of such a permit is a clear contravention of at least three cabinet decrees, issued since the early 1990s, to prevent the demolition of palaces, villas or apartment buildings of outstanding architectural style.

However, the company which owns the villa is convinced that it has a legal right to maximise its investment, and believes that the courts would uphold these rights.

While the prime minister has promised that those responsible for issuing the demolition decree will not go unpunished, no one is able to offer much reassurance about the future of the villa.

A number of architects believe that it has suffered irreparable structural damage. They argue that the standing walls and balconies that remain do not constitute a sound structure, and that it would take a major, and very expensive, reconstruction scheme to restore it to its former glory.

During the last few years, El-Nil Street witnessed the demolition of other, equally interesting old buildings, sold off by heirs unwilling or unable to cover the high maintenance costs of their ancestors' villas and palaces.

It may be too late for the Sobehi villa, but can anything be done to prevent a repetition of this sad scenario at other sites of Egypt's beautiful and diminishing 20th century heritage?

Earlier this year, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak agreed to sponsor a campaign launched by the Mubarak Library, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, and the Fulbright Commission in Egypt to stop the destruction of the city's modern architectural heritage. Earlier this week five committees were formed to study the full legal, architectural and financial dimensions of the problem and draw up a conservation plan.

But according to Adel Mukhtar, professor of architecture at Cairo University, there is much more to this issue than the simple drawing of a conservation plan.

"When you talk about this wealth of architecture you are in fact talking about the property of individuals whose financial needs could force them to either leave these buildings to fall into serious disrepair or to sell them to contractors who have no clue about the architectural value at stake," he explained. Like many other concerned architects, Mukhtar strongly believes that what is really needed is "strong support from the government to find an answer to the current situation and force full and unequivocal commitment from individuals and officials alike."

But for this to happen a full map of all buildings of historic interest in and out of Cairo has to be completed. In late November 1995, former secretary-general of the Supreme Council for Antiquities Abdel-Halim Noureddin ordered a committee to begin work on a survey to list all buildings worthy of conservation. However, according to senior architect Mohamed Abu El-A'mayem, the work of this committee was interrupted by the change of command at the SCA. "The new adminstration was not even interested in the list the committee had been compiling. It ordered the formation of a new committee to start from scratch," he complained.

This problem is only a small part of the larger brick wall that conservationists, from both inside and outside the government, often come up against in their efforts to save the city's architecture from deterioration.

And the problem is not restricted to Cairo and Giza. Equally beautiful and historically significant buildings in other governorates, like Assiut and Minya, are also facing deterioration and demolition.

Kholi quits Tagammu

Political analyst Lutfi El-Kholi, under fire for signing the controversial Copenhagen Declaration on Arab-Israeli peace, has resigned his membership of the leftist Tagammu Party. **Khaled Dawoud** reports

Following a two-day meeting last week, the Central Committee of the leftist Progressive Unionist Party, known as the Tagammu, issued a statement condemning the Copenhagen Declaration as "an act which does not serve just peace and a deviation from the popular Egyptian stand rejecting normalisation" of relations with Israel.

The controversial document was signed at the end of January by intellectuals and politicians from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Palestine and Europe with the aim of creating an "international popular alliance" to press for the continuation of the Arab-Israeli peace process until a comprehensive settlement is reached.

Even before signing the Declaration, the Arab participants in the Copenhagen meeting came under fire from dozens of intellectuals, syndicates and associations in their home countries. On both the national and pan-Arab levels, petitions were signed condemning the Copenhagen document and emphasising that it did not represent the stand of "the majority of the Arab masses" toward Israel. The majority of Arabs, the critics said in their statements, continue to consider Israel as a "colonial, occupying power suppressing the Palestinian people and occupying Arab lands." The Copenhagen Declaration was seen as a kind of "normalisation of relations with the enemy" at a time when the right-wing government of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu rejects "just Arab demands such as full withdrawal from Occupied Territories."

Lutfi El-Kholi responded by resigning from the Tagammu, adding another dramatic twist in the controversy over Copenhagen. Kholi was not only one of the party's founding members in the late 1970s but he himself had fought fierce battles against normalising relations with Israel. His disagreement with the late President Anwar El-Sadat over the signing of the 1978 Camp David peace framework agreements forced him to stay in self-imposed exile for several years. But like several Egyptian intellectuals, Kholi began to reconsider his position after reports were leaked that Israel and the Palestinians had reached agreement following secret negotiations in Oslo in 1993. He later joined a segment of Egyptian intellectuals advocating a "dialogue" with the erstwhile enemy...

At the opening of the Tagammu Central Committee meeting on 19 February, the majority of participants were clearly in favour of taking harsh action against Kholi. Only a few defended his right to take whatever stand he wanted to, pointing out that he signed the Copenhagen document in his own name, and not on behalf of the party.

But those Central Committee members who campaigned for Kholi's immediate expulsion, insisted that the Copenhagen Declaration ran counter to the party's position and that Kholi, as a senior member of the Tagammu, should have informed the party in advance at least.

A compromise was reached when the party's chairman, Khaled Mohieddin, reminded members of internal regulations which clearly state that a member should be questioned first before disciplinary action is taken against him for alleged violations. And in an attempt to appease party hardliners, the Central Committee decided to "summon the party members who took part in the Copenhagen meeting for questioning." This meant, according to Central Committee member Hussein Abdel-Razek, that the party will not only question Kholi and Reda Moharram, another Tagammu member who signed the document, but also other members who had participated in the preparations for the Copenhagen meeting.

According to Tagammu officials, it was decided that Kholi would be questioned on 26 February [yesterday] at a meeting of the party's Central Secretariat. But when the Secretariat met yesterday, it was confronted with Kholi's resignation and was expected to approve it.

Critics of Copenhagen argued that the document, although stating that the peace process should be based on UN Security Council resolutions and the agreements reached between the Arabs and Israelis according to the principle of exchanging land for peace, adopted what was labelled as an "American-Israeli language." Had the document been a clear reflection of "popular Arab demands," the critics said, it should have affirmed what the majority of Arabs see as their inalienable rights.

Kholi, in an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, refused to consider the party's decision to summon him to be questioned as a compromise. "They [Central Committee members] condemned me without listening to what I had to say," Kholi asserted. Reminded that the Central Committee's statement did not mention him by name, Kholi said the statement condemned the Copenhagen Declaration and, as one of the main architects of this document, he considered that as a condemnation of his person.

In his interview with the *Weekly* and in a five-page resignation letter he addressed to Mohieddin, Kholi claimed that the Copenhagen document was "an honest reflection of the party's line and literature on the Arab-Israeli conflict in its various stages."

This argument was rejected by the Tagammu's Secretary-General Rifaat El-Said, although he conceded that a dialogue on relations with the Israeli "peace camp" was taking place inside the party. "But these were only internal discussions and no final decision has been taken yet," El-Said said.

In his letter, Kholi said he did not inform the party in advance "in order to spare it any embarrassment." He also denied that the aim of the document was to push for normalisation between the Arabs and Israel. He said that such a misunderstanding was a result of failing to read the document objectively, bearing in mind its aim, "or maybe a result of not reading it at all, which is more likely."

Kholi insisted that normalisation was not on the Copenhagen meeting's agenda and that the word was not even mentioned in the Declaration. "The only topic was to create a new political and cultural reality in the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of establishing an international and pressuring alliance... to reach a just and comprehensive peace in the *Middle East*," he said.

Kholi concluded by stating that following the Central Committee's decision, "I find myself forced, in all sorrow and pain, to present you with my resignation from the ranks of the party in the establishment of which I had the honour to take part, together with you [Mohieddin] and other colleagues."

Syndicate reprimand

THE PRESS Syndicate's council, at a meeting led by Syndicate chairman Ibrahim Nafie on Sunday, declared that syndicate members who took part in the Copenhagen meeting do not represent the syndicate or its pan-Arab orientation.

"The council declares that it will decisively confront all attempts to violate the resolutions of the Syndicate's General Assembly which oppose normalising relations with Israel until withdrawal from occupied Arab lands is achieved and all legitimate Arab rights are restored," a statement said.

The council asked Al-Ahram's Lutfi El-Kholi and Abdel-Moneim Said, two syndicate members who attended the Copenhagen meeting, to desist from further acts in violation of the resolutions of the Syndicate's General Assembly, the statement added.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

Grist for Mubarak's Washington talks

The recent summit in Damascus between Egypt and Syria underlined the existing unity of Arab positions on the Lebanese and Syrian peace tracks. Atef Sakr reports from Damascus

Strengthening Syria's negotiating position and maintaining its resolve were the most conspicuous results of the meeting of presidents Hosni Mubarak and Hafez Al-Assad that took place this week in Damascus. The two Arab heads of state have been meeting nearly every two months. The latest summit stressed Egypt's sympathetic position towards Syria in the latter's efforts to obtain its rights. The summit also underscored the continued cooperation for peace between the two Arab countries.

Mubarak expressed these views when he referred to the timing of his visit — 22 February — as "unity day", in reference to the 1958-1961 Egyptian-Syrian unity, when both countries merged to form the United Arab Republic under the presidency of the late Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

The timing of Mubarak's visit was a strong signal to Israel that the largest Arab country stands firmly behind Syria. At the conclusion of the summit, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa spoke about Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi cooperation and the possibility of an Arab summit along the lines of the Cairo Arab summit of last June. On that occasion, the Arab countries had forged a united stand backing the Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian positions in seeking full liberation of all Arab land occupied since 1967.

Egypt's backing of Syria is shared by other Arab countries as demonstrated by Arab compliance with Syrian demands to hold normalisation in check as long as Arab land remains under Israeli occupation. Mubarak commented in Damascus that normalisation must be linked to progress in the peace process. Mubarak stated that "if there is any cause for further dialogue in this matter, Egypt and Syria will not hesitate to call for an Arab summit or discuss the issue with other Arab countries."

Arab support for Syria's position in negotiations was upheld during Syrian Vice-President Abdel-Halim Khaddam's recent tour of the region, covering 13 Arab countries, including Lebanon and Sudan. Other indications of Arab support are the freeze in the normalisation of commercial relations between Qatar and Israel as well as reports on the refusal of Morocco's King Hassan II to receive Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in Morocco on the latter's recent return from Washington. No influential Arab country has taken any further steps towards greater normalisation of relations with Israel.

The Mubarak-Assad summit, therefore, emphasised that the Arab-Israeli normalisation bargaining chip is still in the hands of Syria, as peace with Syria is the prerequisite for Israel to establish normal relations with all other Arab countries. This kind of peace, including peace with Lebanon and the Palestinians, will be based on resolutions of international legitimacy.

The Mubarak-Assad summit also backed Syria's position on another issue which came to the fore following the Hebron deal. The deal stipulated that Israel withdraw from 80 per cent of the city while the rest remains under Israeli control. There were fears lest the Hebron protocol set a precedent in Arab-Israeli negotiations, particularly since under the Rabin government it was suggested that Israel withdraws from the Golan to the 1923 rather than 1967 borders. Debate on this proposal raged in Israel until Rabin indicated that Israel is prepared to withdraw to the 1967 borders. However, this is the commitment by which Netanyahu now refuses to abide.

The difference between the 1923 and 1967 borders is 66.5 square kilometres out of 1,200 square kilometres. This area is rich in water resources and touristic sites. Under Netanyahu, Israel has reiterated its intentions of holding on to this land on the pretext that water is of crucial importance to Israel. The significance of the Hebron protocol is that Israel could resort to a similar tactic to divide the Golan so that most of the Golan goes to Syria, while the small yet richer part of the Golan remains under Israeli control.

During the latest Damascus talks, Mubarak asserted that Egypt's backing of Syria's position regarding the Golan has not changed. The Egyptian president also confirmed that the Hebron protocol will under no circumstance set a precedent for future negotiations.

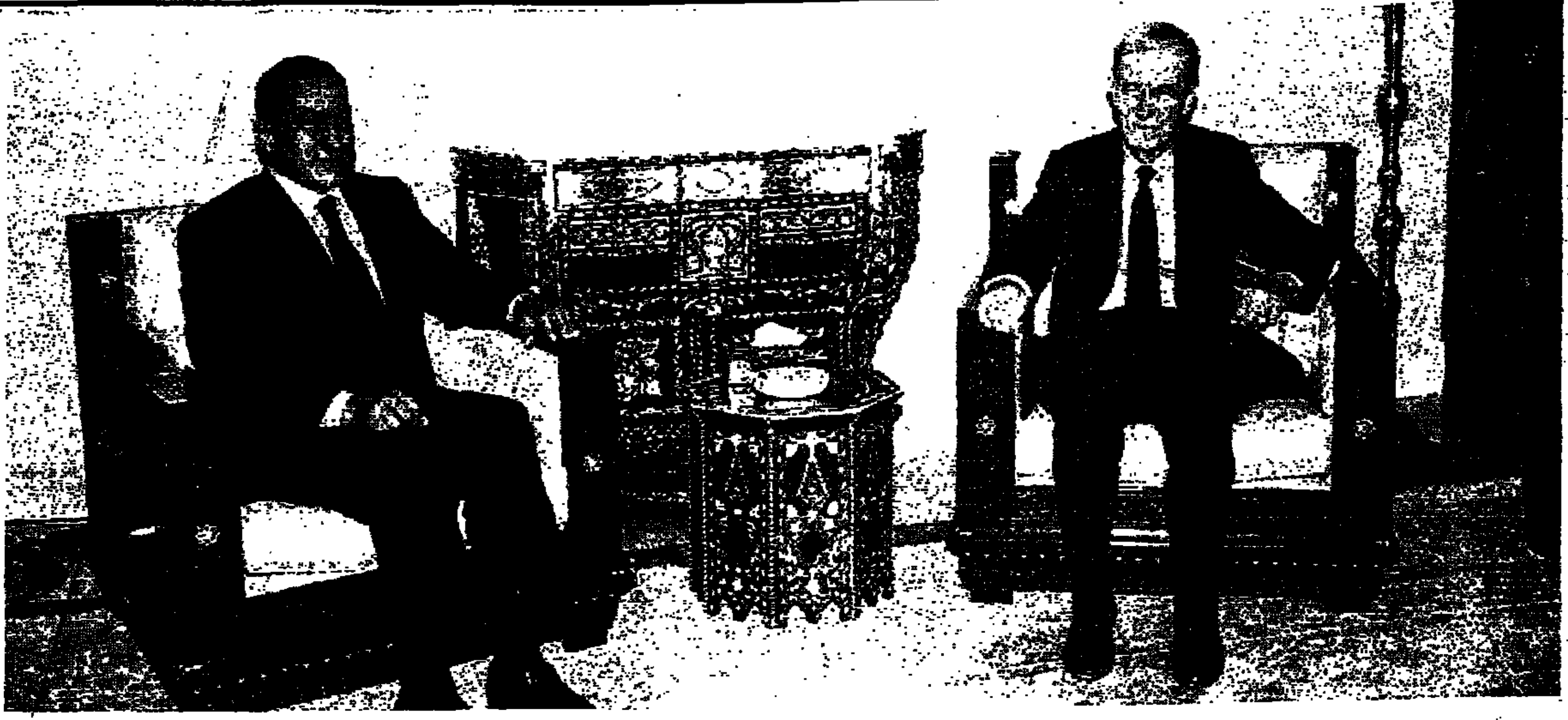
Both Arab presidents confirmed that the positions of their respective countries correspond to their commitment to the resolutions of the June Cairo Arab summit. Similarly, Egypt and Syria are in agreement that the Hebron protocol will not have an effect on talks about the Golan Heights.

The conformity in the Egyptian and Syrian views is due to full coordination between the two Arab presidents, Mahmoud Shoukri, Egypt's ambassador to Syria, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. The importance of the harmony in the two countries' views is that as chairman of the Arab summit, Mubarak can present the Syrian position, backed by all Arab countries, to the American administration during his forthcoming visit to Washington. Therefore, the American administration's request for greater normalisation between Arab states and Israel following the Hebron protocol must be balanced with American demands that Israel withdraws from all Syrian and Lebanese occupied territories. In other words, only full withdrawal will be met by full normalisation.

The Syrian position on the resumption of talks with Israel is a principled position based on the idea of building on what has already been achieved. In this case, it is Israel's acceptance to withdraw from all of the Golan to the pre-1967 borders. This is Syria's main objective from the negotiations. Anything short of that will amount to a Syrian concession to Israel.

If the American administration continues to back Israel's position on resuming negotiations from point zero, the peace process will continue to stall on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Hence, the importance of the impending Washington summit between presidents Mubarak and Clinton. Mubarak will put forward the Syrian-Arab position and seek backing from the US in its capacity as sponsor of the Middle East peace process. The trust that was broken between Israel and Syria when Netanyahu's government abandoned the pledges of the Labour government have to be rebuilt by the US. Syria's position is that international pledges should not be abandoned by successive governments, otherwise chaos will reign. The success of the Washington summit in achieving progress towards a resumption of talks between Syria and Israel, therefore, depends on the present Israeli government's recognition of the pledge made by the Labour government to withdraw from the Golan to the pre-1967 borders.

The Damascus summit, thus, underscored Syria's negotiating position regarding three issues: normalisation, ensuring that the Hebron Protocol will not serve as a precedent for negotiations on the Golan Heights and renewing the commitment to the principle of negotiating on the basis of previous results achieved with the Labour government. Any assessment of the impact of the Damascus summit on the Syrian-Israeli peace track will have to wait until President Mubarak visits Washington next month. Will the US be persuaded to put pressure on Israel to get the talks going, or will Israel's intransigence continue?



President Mubarak and President Assad in Damascus

Netanyahu's Watergate

Bar-On-gate may signal the end of Netanyahu's coalition, but is that to the advantage of the Arabs? Graham Usher writes from Jerusalem

The revelation made last weekend that Israeli leader Binyamin Netanyahu had been questioned "under caution" by the Israeli police has once more thrown into question the future of Israel's ruling Likud coalition.

The police interrogation was prompted by the so-called Bar-On-for-Hebron affair, a month-long scandal that has shaken Israel's political and judicial establishments to their core. The charge, first aired on Israel's Channel One on 22 January, is that Israel's pro-coalition Shas Party conditioned their support for the Hebron agreement on the 10 January appointment of Roni Bar-On as Israel's new attorney-general.

Bar-On lasted barely 48 hours on the job due to the political outcry against his appointment since he is a relatively low-level lawyer who also happens to be on Likud's Central Committee. Channel One's accusation is that Shas supported the appointment and the Hebron agreement in return for Bar-On offering a "plea-bargain" or amnesty to its leader and former interior minister, Aryeh Deri, currently on trial for corruption.

Netanyahu, who approved Bar-On's appointment, was summoned by the police to ascertain whether he was in on the deal. Due to the "evasiveness" of his answers, the police cautioned him, meaning that he was under suspicion of a crime. Netanyahu immediately hired one of Israel's foremost lawyers, Ya'acov Weinroth, to handle any future dealings with the Bar-On investigation. The result is an awful lot of smoke coming out of the prime minister's office and increasing apprehension within his governing coalition.

Israel's internal security minister, Avigdor Kahalani, admitted that if charges were to be brought against the prime minister there would have to be elections. "The government will fall," he said on 22 February. "It will not be able to continue functioning because it will be losing the public's confidence." Leader of the opposition Meretz bloc, Yossi Sarid, went further, insisting that Netanyahu should "voluntarily suspend himself as prime minister" for the duration of the police investigation.

The response of Israel's Labour opposition has been typically confused. On 22 February, Labour's secretary-general, Nissim Zvilli, called on the party to ready itself for early elections, "in view of the increasing signs that Binyamin Netanyahu's government has reached the end of its path." Zvilli was swiftly hauled into line by Shimon Peres. The Labour leader called on "all party members to be patient. I resent the attempt to turn a legal issue into a party one," he said.

Peres' hesitancy has probably less to do with legal niceties than political ambition. Israeli sources say that while Peres has not yet lost hope of heading an Israeli government, he may now prefer to do so in tandem with elements of Likud rather than against them. Given Netanyahu's reluctant adherence to the Oslo process — confirmed by his signing of the Hebron agreement — many Israeli observers believe there is now little political difference between Israel's two main parties, particularly so in relation to any final settlement with the Palestinians.

For political analyst Haim Baram, this "new Israeli consensus" consists of a centrist bloc made up of around 80 Labour and Likud parliamentarians pitted against the ideological settler parties on the right and the Arab parties (and perhaps Meretz) on the left. Its vision vis-à-vis the Palestinians is summed up by Baram. "The goals of the Israeli centre are a partition of the Occupied Territories between Israel and the Palestinians according to the revised formula of maximum territory to Israel, maximum Arabs to Palestine," he says. "If the Palestinians insist on sovereignty for the tiny parcel of land left to them, so be it."

The danger for Palestinians is that any centrist government in Israel will be harder to resist, internationally, than a Likud one. "A free-marketeering Likud-Labour government, using secular and security-oriented arguments, discarding messianic rhetoric, will be popular in the US and even in Europe, especially after the nightmare of Netanyahu and his religious partners," says Baram.

A case in point is Likud's settlement ambitions in occupied East Jerusalem. Netanyahu is expected to authorise the construction of 2,600 units for Har Homa, a new Israeli settlement to be built on 1,850 dunums (about 400 acres) of West Bank land mid-way between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A few Labour members of parliament such as Yossi Beilin have questioned the "timing" of the decision. None, so far, has opposed it.

Iraqi intifada?

Amid reports of possible dialogue between Iraq and the US, Saddam Hussein continues to face internal problems that one opposition leader says could lead to an intifada. Sherine Bahaa reports

Facing internal as well as external pressure, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ended a three-month stand-off this week by granting UN inspectors permission to remove the remains of missile engines for analysis overseas. After three rounds of talks between Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Aziz and Chairman of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) Rolf Ekeus, the two officials signed a statement of agreement last Monday. "The government of Iraq agrees to the removal of remnants of proscribed missile engines from Iraq for in-depth technical analysis by the commission," said the statement.

Under UN resolutions, Iraq must satisfy UNSCOM that it has dismantled its programmes of weapons of mass destruction and missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres before the economic embargo imposed on it after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait can be lifted fully. In his latest mission, Ekeus went as far as questioning whether the remains of the Scud missiles present in Iraq belong to original Soviet-made missile engines or to parts made to cover up the existence of Russian ones.

Iraq, meanwhile, has turned up the rhetoric against Ekeus, calling him a US lackey. According to Ahmed Haboubi, a former Iraqi minister, the US, failing to oust Saddam in the 1991 Gulf War, wants to undermine him with restrictions. Haboubi argues that sanctions have been imposed on Cuba for nearly 30 years and no change in the regime has been achieved. "The sanctions are hitting the Iraqis and not the regime."

Although this is not the first time that Saddam Hussein yields to the demands of the UN Special Commission, his acceptance now is of great significance as it comes amid reports of imminent trade opportunities with the West, namely the US. Some diplomatic sources have confirmed the reports, naming the mediator as the European Union Middle East Coordinator Miguel Moratinos. Moratinos is studying the circumstances and conditions which might act as a catalyst for an Iraqi-US dialogue.

Nizar Hamdoon, the Iraqi ambassador to the UN, did not deny the news that a major event must take place before the US thinks of opening dialogue with Iraq. Yet, officials agree that Iraq has much to offer the US, starting from the extraction and prospection for oil to offering US companies lucrative contracts to rebuild the country's infrastructure. Above and beyond economic considerations, a crucial issue for the US is the Iraqi relationship with Syria and how it can help in case talks between Syria and Israel are resumed. It is within this context that Hamdoon's recent talks with a number of US businessmen and officials can be viewed.

The Iraqi regime is pressured by the deteriorating conditions inside Iraq. Even though a deal was struck between Baghdad and the UN last December known as the oil-for-food deal, Iraqis have not reaped its fruit yet. "Any optimism the Iraqis may have felt after the oil-for-food deal took effect has since dissipated," a Western diplomat was quoted as saying.

Iraq presented a letter of protest to the UN last month, complaining that procedures for purchasing humanitarian supplies and shipping them to Iraq are so cumbersome that the goods take one month to arrive in Iraq. Although food, medicine and humanitarian supplies are exempted from the sanctions, Iraq is still deprived of the oil revenue and foreign accounts needed to pay for such items. Besides, the sanctions committee must approve each purchase.

Reports of a power struggle have been floating recently in Baghdad, bringing back to memory the defection to Amman of Hussein Kamel and his brother, Saddam's sons-in-law, and their subsequent assassinations upon their return to Baghdad.

In the meantime, reports of Saddam's wife, Sajida, being placed under house arrest have further fuelled rumours of internal weakness. Iraqi opposition sources say that Sajida and her two daughters, Raghad and Rana, are being held at Al-Awjeh palace outside Saddam's family stronghold of Tikrit, north of Baghdad. According to the same sources, Sajida had protested against Saddam's pardon of the assassins of her two daughters' husbands. Another blow to Saddam's hold on power was the shooting of his elder son Udai which caused him serious wounds. Udai was regarded by Iraqis as the legitimate heir to the leadership of the country.

Opposition leader Haboubi believes that this internal unease is natural under a regime like the one in Baghdad. "The regime is abnormal. It is a closed system. It has suffered from those years of pressure both politically and economically," says Haboubi. According to a leading Iraqi opposition figure living in Baghdad, Saddam's security forces have arrested about 600 people since the assassination attempt on his son, including more than 20 senior military officers and officials.

This explains Saddam's plans to build a new army under the command of his son Qusai. According to Haboubi, military forces in Baghdad are many, "the general army, private army, Presidential Guard, [and the] Saddam regiment. They were all wooed by Saddam to buy their loyalty to his regime." However, Haboubi added, "all can be penetrated."

Saddam, who took power in 1979, has relied increasingly on relatives to govern since the 1991 Gulf War in which a US-led coalition ousted Iraqi troops from neighbouring Kuwait. However, observers believe that a solution does not lie in building up more military forces; the solution rests "in granting people more freedom," said Haboubi. Haboubi blames the Iraqi regime for tightening its iron grip on its citizens as crises arise. "All this gives opportunity for an *intifada* (uprising) to flare up."

Coca-Cola named America's Most Admired Company

The Coca-Cola Company has once again been named America's Most Admired Company in an annual survey by *Fortune* magazine, one of the world's leading business publications.

As well as taking the top overall honour, Coca-Cola was also voted number one for financial soundness, value as a long-term investment, quality of products and services, quality of management, and community and environmental responsibility — dominating five of the eight categories in the survey.

More than 13,000 senior executives and analysts participated in the survey to rank 431 *Fortune* 1,000 companies in eight key attributes.

"What a year it was for repeat winner Coca-Cola," stated *Fortune* magazine in its 3 March issue. "The Summer Olympics provided the Atlanta-based soft drink maker with a spectacular showcase for its ubiquitous global brand."

The magazine cited Coca-Cola's strong business performance as a dominant factor in its reputation. "It earned US$ 3.5 billion last year, a 17 per cent increase over 1995.

It also provided a whopping 43.3 per cent total return to investors in 1996, 23 points higher than the S&P 500 index, and its ten-year performance delivered a platinum 29.8 per cent average annual return."

Speaking of the company's success, Douglas Ivester, chief operating officer of the Coca-Cola Company, said, "Everybody falls into the trap of looking at the latest gadget, or thinking that creativity has to be in the arts and sciences. But you've got to encourage creativity in staffing, strategy, branding, and business processes too."

Following Coca-Cola, the other four top American companies were Mirage Resorts, Merck, United Parcel Service and Microsoft.

UAE mediation bid at standstill

The first Arab proposal for mediation between the parties at war in Sudan is so far getting nowhere. Mohamed Khaled writes

The United Arab Emirates has offered to mediate between the Sudanese government and the opposition, following the recent worsening in a confrontation that has escalated into armed struggle. The Emirates' initiative came amid a flurry of mediation efforts at the regional level aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement between the warring parties. Out of these initiatives, Sheikh Zayed's proposal increasingly has attracted attention at both regional and international levels.

While in the UAE, Sadek Al-Mahdi, former Sudanese Prime Minister, had a series of meetings with Sheikh Zayed, the minister of foreign affairs and other officials.

Al-Mahdi was quoted as saying that the armed struggle will continue. "Following the overthrow of the current regime, the National Islamic Front (NIF) will not be part of the interim government," Al-Mahdi stated. This is in clear contradiction to proposals by the US and other Western countries emphasising the need for the participation of the NIF in a new Sudanese government once the current regime is out of power.

Sheikh Zayed's initiative, although it has yet to be developed into a detailed proposal, was welcomed by the Sudanese opposition as a sign of promising progress in the Arab position towards the conflict in Sudan.

"The initiative is highly welcomed as positive progress from the Arab side. For the last seven years, Arabs have not shown a satisfactory concern about the situation in the Sudan. We believe that when they express concern through such initiatives, they get closer to the problem and consequently they can play a more significant role in favour of the Sudanese people," Al-Tigani Al-Tayeb, secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Sudan, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Al-Tayeb said that this initiative, along with all future initiatives, will be considered seriously by the leadership of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the coalition of the Sudanese opposition.

The current initiative acquires its importance from being the first initiative by the Arabs. Two previous initiatives came from the Africans.

Nageeb Al-Khair, member of the executive committee of the Umma Party, told the *Weekly*: "The initiative of Sheikh Zayed is a well appreciated sign of goodwill on the part of the Emirates to contain the tensions in the Sudan. Until this moment, the initiative has not proposed a clear detailed perspective, nor are its major components known to us." According to Al-Khair, the Umma Party is pleased that the NDA programme for the restoration of democracy in Sudan and the maintenance of regional security enjoys the full support of the countries of the region.

Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir has welcomed the initiative and had a telephone conversation with Sheikh Zayed about it. Hassan Al-Turabi, speaker of the Sudanese parliament and Khartoum's elder statesman, has said that Bashir would accept the Emirates' mediation if it is confined to resolving the outstanding problems between Sudan and its neighbours Ethiopia and Eritrea. Al-Turabi rejected any kind of dialogue with the Sudanese opposition. Sometime earlier, Al-Turabi had described the northern opponents as traitors and clearly stated: "No negotiation with traitors." Al-Turabi's position is seen by observers as a negative response to the initiative.

A related development has been the sudden visit of Al-Bashir to Kenya, following his telephone conversation with Sheikh Zayed. The purpose of the visit was to request Kenyan President Daniel Arab Moi that he mediate between the Sudanese government and the southern rebels led by John Garang through reactivating the IGADD good offices that have been dormant since 1994. The Sudanese president accepted granting the right to self-determination to the southern rebels and urged Moi to arrange a meeting between himself and Garang.

Al-Bashir's offer was considered an attempt to split the opposition. The move was followed by Al-Bashir's statement that Sudan will continue its cultural Islamisation project, thus ruling out any possibility of reconciliation with the opposition.

Following Al-Bashir's visit to Kenya, the Sudanese government sent a delegation led by senior security official Qutbi Al-Mahdi, on a secret visit to Ethiopia. The delegation, whose visit was disclosed by the Ethiopian government, conveyed the Sudanese government's wish to improve the strained relations with Ethiopia. However, the secret visit did not achieve its objectives.

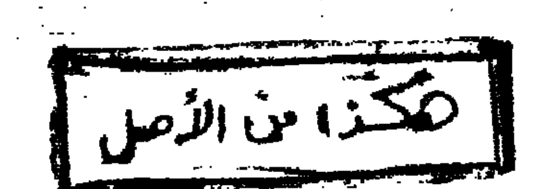
According to commentators, both Al-Bashir and Al-Turabi's moves have cast shadows of doubt on the Sudanese government's credibility with regard to acceptance of Sheikh Zayed's initiative. While Al-Bashir is reducing the Sudanese conflict to a northern-southern conflict, Al-Turabi is emphasising the conflict between Sudan and neigbouring countries as the major issue requiring mediation.

Recent diplomatic developments followed the large-scale military offensive launched by the northern Sudanese opposition jointly with the southern guerrillas in southern and eastern Sudan. The Sudanese government accused Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda of direct involvement in the offensive. All three denied that this was the case.

"The government's position overlooks the reality of the three dimensions of the conflict: between the government and the Sudanese political forces, the government and the south, and finally, the government and the neigbouring countries," said Al-Khair. Mubarak Al-Mahdi, secretary-general of NDA, commented: "The contradiction in the government's position is a reflection of the deep internal crisis in the regime and the presence of more than one decision-making authority since it is unable to reach a unified position towards the initiative."

NDA officials promised to discuss and decide on the initiative at the forthcoming NDA supreme committee meeting in Asmara. They affirmed that all initiatives, whether coming from the Arab world or Africa, will be looked at in relation to the opposition consensus resolutions of the 1995 Asmara conference and the NDA memorandum presented to the Khartoum government in June 1995. The backbone of both is the return to democracy.

The mediation is starting in an unfavourable atmosphere. The responses emanating from Khartoum impose on the mediation the function of resolving the disputes between the Sudanese government and neigbouring countries rather than with the home-grown opposition. This has led the UAE to make the necessary clarification. "The initiative proposed by the UAE calls for a dialogue between the Sudanese government and the opposition and not between Khartoum and another country," an official UAE statement said.



Men of religion and of war



Netanyahu's attempts to impose peace by force are doomed to fail, writes **Amin Heweidy**. The prime minister has created a new ghetto, guarded on all sides, yet paralysed by the past

Knowing the thoughts of one's protagonist, especially those he expressed before assuming authority, is useful. Comparing the slogans he upheld before reaching power with the decisions he makes following his accession is often interesting. Before becoming prime minister, Benjamin Ben Sion Netanyahu jotted down his thoughts in a book, *A Place Among Nations*, published in English. The title was changed to *A Place Under the Sun* in the Hebrew edition; the latter title was maintained in the Arabic translation. The author, at the invitation of the Arab Publishing House, added a personal introduction to the Arabic edition. He seized the opportunity to introduce himself to the Arabic reader with alacrity, even as he revealed his ugly side in so doing.

The thoughts expressed in the book raise three general comments. First, the ideology it promoted appeared at the wrong time. Following the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, Perestroika, Gorbachev's Glasnost and the subsequent trend towards globalisation, the current world order has moved away from extremist ideologies. This is due to *the inability of decision-makers to* protect certain ideals from the effects of international, regional and local repercussions. With ambiguous determination, obscure objectives are being achieved. This explains Peres's words to Netanyahu during the first Knesset session after the elections: "Rest assured, Mr Prime Minister, that you will not be able *to abide by the slogans you raised during* your electoral campaign. You will find yourself under pressure to make decisions which will not be satisfactory to you, for there is a difference between brandishing slogans and decision-making." This prediction was fulfilled when the Hebron Protocol was signed recently.

Secondly, Bibi's overwhelming passion for history has made him a prisoner of inaccurate historical and geographic information based on Zionist allegations and other prejudiced testimonials. As Peres wrote in *The New Middle East*: "The darkness of the past should not preclude the prospects of a new dawn. We have to forget the past since we cannot change it." Nonetheless, we Arabs should not completely forget the past. To us, it represents the violation of justice; it reminds us of our cause. At the same time, we should not allow the past to paralyse our movements, as it has done to Netanyahu, according to his book.

Third, the fear that grips Netanyahu is caused by the knowledge that Israel is a foreign body, implanted forcibly, an alien island in a sea of hatred, as a result of prior injustice to his own people. Oddly enough, he resorts only to force, not diplomacy, in confronting this situation. He has never tried to deal with his fear in any other way. Fear, however, is not a sin; everyone is afraid at one time or another. Fear should be conquered through good, neighbourly relations, the restoration of property to its rightful owners, and the implementation of just laws in regional dealings. Netanyahu failed to heed the simple fact that people are born with a free will which cannot be obliterated. Though it may be suppressed under certain circumstances, for instance during a campaign of terror, its suppression has no lasting effect. Once terror is dispelled, the will to survive emerges again with full force. This is the real issue of concern to Netanyahu, the force that compels him to seek peace through security. Peres, on the other hand, sought peace through economics. This was not out of disregard for security: he never refrained from expanding the settlements, or building belt-ways, but he believed that existing mine fields and fortifications were sufficient for their purpose.

Netanyahu's version of peace comes as something of a shock. In his opinion, there are two types of peace: one between democratic states, and the other with countries under dictatorial regimes. *In the first, peace* means open frontiers, free trade, tourism, scientific and cultural cooperation, the restriction of hostile propaganda, the reduction of military fortifications along borderlines, and the absence of military mobilisation or other military preparations. Democratic states do not resort to force to resolve disputes. Their foreign differences are resolved in the same manner as *their domestic* problems: by dialogue.

Peace with dictatorships, Netanyahu believes, is another matter altogether. Such states tend to resolve their foreign as well as their domestic conflicts through the use of force. In this connection, he has asserted that Israel is a democracy, while the Arab states are all dictatorships. He acknowledges the correlation between the type of government of a country and the tendency towards hostility and war. Therefore, peace with the Arab countries *must be* "a peace through force" or "peace through deterrence". His pretext is that submitting to dictators' threats heightens the potential of war. To confront them with force should not be considered an obstacle to peace. Hence the policy of a peace based on Israeli security.

Netanyahu's ideas require close scrutiny. The thoughts expressed in his book are directly copied from Henry Kissinger's *American Foreign Policy*. But Netanyahu made no reference to the original source. Plagiarism, of course is a common phenomenon, as I have noted before (see *Kissinger and the Management of International Conflicts*). But problems of substance arise even here. Israeli democracy is extremely debatable. Usurping land belonging to others, altering a nation's geographical and demographic features, racial discrimination: all *are characteristic of* Israeli occupation, and all are undemocratic practices. When people's ordeals are linked to their economic backwardness, the denial of their social and economic rights and the extent of their political participation in their own country, as is the case in Israel, that can hardly be called democratic.

For Netanyahu to realise the true conditions prevailing in his country, he needs to be reminded of the words spoken by Theodore Herzl in 1904, shortly before his death. He warned of two dangers *threatening the Jewish state from the* very date of its inception, two dangers which he thought could be the cause of its collapse. He counselled all Jews to beware of men of religion and men of war. After fulfilling their roles in establishing the state, both would attempt to gain control and the secular foundations of the country would collapse. *Herzl advised: "We must keep those rab*bis confined within their synagogues, just as the military should remain in their barracks." Perhaps Netanyahu will admit that his country has been both militarised and placed under the control of extremist rabbis. A problem of such dimensions will prove extremely difficult for Netanyahu or any other person to solve.

Netanyahu's advocacy of a tough attitude as the way to achieve peace merely reflects the complexities of the premier's personality. Can he not show the same regard for peace as President Nixon? *In 1999 — Victory Without War*, Nixon wrote: "The world yearns for peace, but it must be a perfect peace, free of conflicts and differences. That is just an illusion. A *prerequisite* of real peace calls upon countries to recognise these conflicts and differences and to coexist with them, as they endeavour to re*solve them by all possible means except* the use of force. If compelled to resort to force, this should be restricted to minimum measures."

Nothing can endanger peace more than a very powerful country neighbouring a very weak one. Power necessarily expands until checked by another force compelling it to retreat. Any agreement concluded under unequal relations of power is provisional and incomplete in substance. Regional stability will not be achieved under the menace of nuclear or conventional threats.

Peace imposed by force or peace by deterrence, as Netanyahu describes it, will not be peace, because it will be founded on a balance of force, not a balance of interests. The balance of force is unstable in the sense that one day it can be on one side, the next day on the other. While no one can deny that peace needs force to protect it, without parity of forces between the parties to peace, the tendency to aggression will always rise again. Nothing can endanger peace more than a very powerful country neighbouring a very weak one. Power necessarily expands until checked by another force *compelling it to retreat. Any agree*ment concluded under unequal relations of power is provisional and incomplete in substance. Regional stability will not be achieved under the menace of nuclear or conventional threats. It may only be achieved — although the parties concerned may not be fully satisfied with this solution — by restricting the use of force, by eliminating the sources of danger and not merely attempting to contain them. Should such an arrangement be reached, the parties concerned will be speaking the same language.

One of the two *aspects of peace, ac*cording to the Israeli premier, involves the exercise of force, or of deterrence. The other aspect is what may be termed the buffer zones: in other words, holding on to the occupied territories in the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

The West Bank forms a natural buffer zone that protects the coastal plain against attack from the eastern side. Maintaining it under Israeli control would provide the Israeli army with the necessary time to mobilise and transfer reserve *troops to the front. The 15 kilo*metres to the Mediterranean would be traversed by enemy troops in a few hours. At this point, some clarifications regarding the premier's mortal fear are necessary. The threat of attack from the eastern side refers not to Jordan but to Iraq and the Scud missiles used during Desert Storm. The eastern slopes of the West Bank dominate the roads coming from that direction, and, in our opinion, also the bridges erected on the Jordan River. *These include the Allenby* Bridge that reaches up to Jericho, King Abdullah Bridge which leads to Jerusalem and the Damia Bridge leading to Nablus. These western slopes also control the coastal plain of Israel through surveillance or firing range. This explains why Rolf Ekeus and his committee have undertaken to destroy the Iraqi arsenal, in accordance with the Security Council resolution, chiefly for Israel's benefit — a decision warmly supported by some Arab countries. Netanyahu believes the West Bank provides not only strategic depth but also strategic height for Israel. Hence, withdrawal from the West Bank is impossible.

The Golan Heights rise up to 1,300 metres above fertile fields in the gorge of Hawla. They cover no more than 25km at the broadest point. The Syrian army is at an approximate distance of 25km from Hebron, and 75km from Haifa. The strategic depth of the occupied Golan is of limited importance, but its strategic height, and that of Jabal Al-Sheikh, as well as some other *mountains, compensate for that limita*tion. Apart from this, the Golan Heights dominate the water resources of the Jordan River and of Lake Tiberiade, which represent 40 per cent of Israel's water reserve. Ceding the Golan and restoring it to Syria will provide it with the opportunity to cut off Israel's water supplies. Therefore, *to withdraw from the Golan is to* abandon Israeli security.

As for the other buffer zones, Netanyahu knows that Sinai has been vacated. Its 200km create a buffer zone that provides a reasonable warning period for Israel. Regarding the threats from the east, Jordan also provides a buffer zone against Iraq. Hence, any threat to Jordan will constitute a threat to Israel. The same applies to the Golan, which represents a buffer zone against Syria. This is why neither of them can be relinquished.

Netanyahu refuses to rely on international guarantees or international forces as alternatives to keeping the land. This is similar to the theory propounded by Yigal Allon, a leading member of the Labour Party, after the 1967 war. It stipulated the necessity to keep land, canals (referring to the Suez Canal), rivers (meaning the Jordan River) and heights (namely the West Bank and the Golan). He believed, exactly as *Netanyahu does*, that dependence on international guarantees or forces was dangerous, because those forces would find nothing to defend *if* Israel was attacked.

Netanyahu has put himself in a strait-jacket, a new ghetto, guarded on all sides, with the aim of achieving absolute security for Israel, with no regard for others who demand mutual security. Consequently, peace as visualised by the *Israeli prime minister is a lame duck*, according to some. Others find it completely crippled.

Netanyahu must remember. His forces were on the eastern banks of the Suez Canal, but *withdrew to the inter*national eastern borders under much pressure, including the use of force. His forces were in the Gaza Strip, but they were made to abandon it to the Palestinians, while Yitzhak Rabin prayed that the whole Strip drown in the sea with all its occupants in revenge for the losses incurred by his occupation forces. Netanyahu insisted on holding on to Hebron, after writing at length about it in *A Place Under the Sun*, but was later compelled to surrender 80 per cent of the town. When asked *at a press conference* in Jerusalem, on 16 January 1997, whether Likud had relinquished its dream of Greater Israel, he replied that Likud had not changed its ideology, but *reality* had changed. After two helicopters collided on their outgoing dirty mission to south Lebanon, a mission in which 73 were killed (nine of whom were officers), he heard his compatriots demanding that Israel pull out of south Lebanon, even unilaterally. His was the most serious comment on the accident: "That ca*tastrophe is part of Israel's war for ex*istence since the other side's objective is not to force us to withdraw from Lebanon, but from Israel itself." The Israeli prime minister is now talking about existence and not about border lines. This is his greatest tragedy. The prime minister is afraid.

Regional stability shall not be realised under nuclear or traditional canopies, and peace shall not be achieved if the occupation of territories continues. But it can be achieved through *agreements founded on the balance of* both force and interests. While none of the parties may be completely satisfied, mutual security will be guaranteed. This will encourage not only present generations, but also their children, to preserve peace.

The writer is an expert in strategic affairs and Egypt's former minister of defence.

Louisiana meets up with Qana

Operation Grapes of Wrath threw a spanner into the works of the Louisiana Initiative, explains **Lutfi El-Kholi** in the second part of his discussion on the Copenhagen Declaration. Arab intellectuals could not continue to negotiate with Israelis so soon after the barbaric massacre of Lebanese citizens and the devastation of Lebanon's infrastructure



Preparations were underway *to hold the third session of the* Louisiana Initiative, scheduled for the second week of June 1996. The Egyptian participants wrote to Herbert Pundik, the go-between, to inform him that this session should provide for the participation of Palestinian intellectuals and that Jordanian intellectuals had agreed to participate in principle, but that they still needed some time to consult among themselves in order to *determine which of them* would attend. The problem regarding Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals was still unresolved. At the same time, the Israelis from the left and the Peace Now movement, for the first time, had been able to convince sectors of the Israeli political centre — by their standards — to participate. This occurred after they had had the opportunity to review the summaries Pundik had *drawn up for the two previous* sessions. These sectors consisted of members of a splinter party from the Likud, headed by David Levi.

In April of that year, however, Israel suddenly launched massive and savage military hostilities against the people *of Lebanon* and the Lebanese infrastructure. This invasion, which resulted, among other tragedies, in the massacre of Qana, caused the death of over 100 Lebanese civilians, including women, children and the elderly, who had sought shelter in the UN camp in the village against vicious Israeli bombardments. According to then Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who was also at the time minister of de*fence, this operation, which he* code-named "Grapes of Wrath", was launched as a "legitimate response" against a Hizbullah Katyusha rocket attack against northern Israel. This attack, launched from behind the Israeli occupied self-declared security zone in southern Lebanon, claimed no fatalities and only one casualty.

The Israeli response provoked wide-scale popular outrage in the Arab world and, indeed, in international public opinion, particularly in view of the fact that the scope and intensity of the "reprisal" was so disproportionate to the attack launched by the Lebanese resistance. It was clear that Peres, *through* this atrocity, was attempting to placate the Israeli right and to outmanoeuvre the Likud Party headed by Netanyahu, his rival in the upcoming prime*ministerial elections. This was* the first time in Israeli electoral history that the prime minister would be elected through direct popular ballot. Netanyahu and the Likud had accused Peres and the Labour Party of gambling the security and vital interests of Israel against the illusion of a peaceful settlement. The Israeli right held that this "peace" jeopardised the safety and security of Israel, which only a Likud victory and the rise of Netanyahu to prime minister could protect, even if that meant stopping and radically reversing the peace process.

In other words, "Grapes of Wrath" was not, in reality, a response to Hizbullah, as Peres had claimed. It was the grotesque way in which Peres sought to demonstrate that he, not Netanyahu, was the "mighty lion" that would protect Israeli security, even if that meant the massacre of innocent Lebanese civilians and the destruction of the progress achieved by the Lebanese people in rebuilding their country after years of savage and ruinous civil war.

Naturally, the Egyptians who had been involved in the Louisiana Initiative agreed with the popular Arab condemnation of the Israeli aggression and massacre in Leb*anon, and we expressed our* views to this effect in numerous communiqués and articles. In one such article I suggested that, in response to Israel's use of violence, in spite of its so-called adherence to the peace process, the Syrian government, which has about 40,000 troops on the ground in Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese government, *should agree with the Egyptian* government to send a joint Egyptian-Syrian force to the sites of combat in Lebanon. This would confront the Israeli government with a new military-political reality involving the three countries that had been participants in the peace process. At the time, I surmised that Peres, when suddenly confronted with that reality, would be forced to cease hostilities. He would not want *to appear to have submitted to* Netanyahu's antagonism toward the peace process and the Oslo Accords; nor would he want to be viewed as having brought the entire region to the brink of conflagration.

We contacted Pundik to inform him that those of us involved in the Louisiana Initiative must issue a joint condemnation of the Israeli invasion and do everything in our power to put an immediate *stop to the Israeli aggression.* We expected that the Israeli intellectuals who had participated in the dialogues and who were active in the Peace Now movement would mobilise a response inside Israel. After contacting the Israeli participants in the Danish-*sponsored* dialogues, Pundik responded that they had declared their opposition to the "Grapes of Wrath" in numerous communiqués and that the Peace Now movement *had* staged several protest demonstrations, although they admitted that the level of protest was far from commensurate with the scale of the tragedy in Lebanon. The barbaric attack, they confessed, was due to the heated and complex electoral *campaign, although they said* there were signs that a strong opposition was emerging inside the Labour Party and within the military establishment to the Israeli operations in Lebanon, because of fears that these operations compounded the risks to Israeli security itself.

On 13 May 1996, I faxed Copenhagen the following message:

"I send to you, with my deepest pain and anger, my regrets for being unable to participate in the third session of the dialogues at Louisiana. The reason for this is my profound moral, psychological and political revulsion at the Israeli aggression against the Lebanese people and their basic infrastructure."

Our response to Pundik was that the position of the Israeli intellectuals and the leaders of the Peace Now movement did *not constitute sufficient op*position to the horrendous events in Lebanon and that they had thereby demeaned the value and concept of the Louisiana Initiative.

It was our opinion that Israeli hostilities had brought to the fore a new political and moral dilemma in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This conflict was still in a transitional phase from comprehensive military confrontation to peace negotiations based on the Madrid formula of land for peace and the Oslo accords. Not only were negotiations extremely unstable and fragile, they were *still unpopular among the* overwhelming majority of the public on both sides. In their denial of the legitimacy of the existence of the other, these parties reject the notion of coexistence with the enemy, in spite of the fact that a just and comprehensive peace is vital to the future of development, democracy and human rights in all countries involved in the conflict. The peace process, however, was not progressing with the desired speed and efficacy. Indeed, it was moving far too erratically and timorously, a fact that we believed emanated *primarily* from weaknesses in the Israeli state and society.

Perhaps the most definite *proof of this was that the elec*toral campaign that followed so quickly in the wake of the assassination of Yitzhaq Rabin by fanatic Zionists underscored the turmoil within the Labour Party led by Shimon Peres, the very leader whom Israel describes as the architect of the Oslo Accords and the negotiations with the PLO, but who, in *the climax of the elec*toral campaign against the Likud, reverted to military aggression in violation of the government's political commitments and the spirit of peaceful settlement. It is in this paradox that the new stumbling block before a just and comprehensive peace lay. The dilemma — and the dangers — were compounded by Netanyahu's victory by a one per cent margin in the Israeli prime ministerial elections, *giving the political upper hand* to the Likud's extremist position against the basic tenets and terms of reference of the peace process.

After lengthy deliberations, my Egyptian colleagues and I agreed that I, in my capacity as the permanent member of the Egyptian team in the Copenhagen dialogues, should write a letter to Pundik and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs excusing ourselves from participation *in* future sessions of the dialogue. On 13 May 1996, I faxed Copenhagen the following message, the text of which I will relay here in full so that Egyptian and Arab readers may be apprised of all the facts. The fax I sent read as follows:

"I *send to you, with my* deepest pain and anger, my regrets for being unable to participate in the third session of the dialogues at Louisiana. The reason for this is my profound moral, psychological and political revulsion at the Israeli aggression against the Lebanese people and their basic infrastructure.

"I believe this aggression is entirely unjustified, particularly from the perspective of *peaceful resolution to the Mid*dle East conflict. The Israeli partner in this process evinced not the slightest compunction in using the utmost degrees of military force against us in Lebanon. If this is how a party *that is supposedly committed* to the peace process behaves, what is one to expect of those that are not committed to it or are even opposed to a settlement?

"Herein lies the perilous di*lemma. The declared pretext* for the Israeli aggression was to retaliate against the Katyusha strike launched by Hizbullah against Israeli civilians. As you know, we are firmly opposed to attacks against civilians, whether Arab or Israeli. However, we perceive that the aggression was unable to silence the Katyushas of Hizbullah. Rather, it was aimed at the women, children and elderly people who had sought refuge in the UN centres in Qana and against the Lebanese people in their entirety. The Israeli response, as you must have observed, was in*humanely excessive and of a* destructive force entirely disproportionate and incommensurate to the force of a Katyusha rocket."

On 21 May 1996, I received Pundik's response in which he said that he understood my feelings, as an Arab, toward the tragic events in Lebanon that "resulted from the war between Israel and the Hizbullah." He urged me to revise my decision not to participate in the dialogue, arguing that the ultimate *purpose* of the dialogues was "to prevent the repetition of military violence of this nature and to push toward a peaceful settlement. Now, in times of crisis, dialogue is much more essential."

Around that time, I also received a visit from an official from the Danish Foreign Ministry, the sponsor of the initiative, in order to convince me to change my mind. I remained adamant in my refusal, *however, as did my Egyptian* colleagues who had also been invited to attend the third session.

During the UN general assembly meetings held in New York during the same period, the Danish foreign minister met with the Egyptian foreign minister, Amr Moussa. The Danish foreign minister explained the Louisiana Initiative to Moussa, stressing the importance Europe attached to it *and the dismay felt at the set*back caused by the Egyptian participants' decision not to continue; he asked Moussa to use his good offices to persuade the Egyptian intellectuals to change their minds.

This was the first time Amr Moussa had heard about the Louisiana Initiative. He was impressed by the idea and the Danish and European efforts. He told the Danish foreign minister that Egypt would always welcome the principle of dialogue among intellectuals in order to support the peace process in accordance with the formula of land for peace, the implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli agreements and the resumption of negotiations *on the Syrian and Lebanese* fronts. He added, however, that, in his capacity as foreign minister, he would be unable to intervene to alter the opinion of Egyptian intellectuals one way or the other. Such a prospect was beyond his jurisdiction since these intellectuals were acting in a purely personal capacity.

When Amr Moussa *returned to Cairo*, he contacted some of the Egyptians who had been involved in the Copenhagen dialogues in order to learn as much as he could about the initiative and our current positions toward it. We outlined the history of the project and the causes for refusing to continue in the wake of the Israeli aggression against Lebanon, in light of Likud's rise to power and given Netanyahu's blatantly anti-Arab statements. Amr Moussa then informed us of what transpired between himself *and the Danish foreign min*ister and reproached us for not having notified him of this initiative, in his capacity, as he said, as a citizen interested in peace-related issues, even if he happened to be the foreign minister. He would have appreciated such a courtesy, he explained, since the Danish Foreign Ministry sponsoring the initiative had informed the European ministries of foreign affairs and the European Union. Apart from that, however, he made no attempt whatsoever to influence our decision.

In the beginning of June, the Danish Foreign Ministry announced that the third session of the Louisiana dialogue, scheduled for the second week of June, would be postponed indefinitely. No reason was given for this and contact between us ceased. Then, a month later, we suddenly found Herbert Pundik and David Kimche in Cairo, knocking at our doors. It was at this point that we entered a new, qualitatively different phase of the initiative.

Russia's choice

Eqbal Ahmad examines Russia's strategic predicament

The Clinton administration has committed its power and prestige to the expansion of NATO to include the former Warsaw Pact countries. The entry of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary is envisaged for an initial phase that will begin next July. It is uncertain who will follow thereafter. What is certain is that Russia is to be excluded, the reasons for this being unclear. Madeleine Albright, the tip of the expansionist lance, has been visiting European capitals as well as Moscow this month to push forward her mission of advancing the "framework of world peace."

Russians view her project with a different eye. They are anxious and angry. NATO's expansion, says Russia's Defence Minister Igor Rodionov will "recreate the times of the arms race which we went through." Russians of diverse outlook and conflicting ideologies — Mikhail Gorbachev, Communist Party leader Gennadi Zyuganov, the ultra-Euro-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky and even Anatoly Chubais, President Yeltsin's pro-Western chief of staff, have raised their voice against NATO's expansion. The reasons behind this unusual consensus are compelling and likely to remain so even after the government in Moscow caves in to American cajoling and NATO is expanded. Therein lies the great danger to the future of peace and the world.

Since American and European officials refer to NATO these days as though it were a football team, a reminder is in order. NATO is a military alliance, by far the best armed in the world. The first Eastern entries, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, have from Napoleon Bonaparte to Adolf Hitler's time, provided the springboard and corridor of West European invasions into Russia. These were murderous assaults that completely devastated large parts of Russia and cost more than 60 million Russian lives in the space of a century and a half. An estimated 30 million Russians lost their lives in World War II alone. Any self-respecting military historian would testify that Russia broke Hitler's back, making the Allied victory possible. In return, it got the Yalta Agreement and the Cold War.

Even after the Cold War ended and the Berlin Wall had come down, the Russians were not invited to the 50th anniversary of the Allied victory. Obviously, the West remained committed to Russia's exclusion. I recall the bitterness with which Natasha, my Russian research assistant, noted the exclusion of her country and people on that occasion: "No one knows a family in Russia that did not lose someone in that war. We defeated Hitler and they will not even commemorate our dead. It makes me feel sick," she said. I reminded Natasha that from the ashes of that war had come at least the Yalta Agreement recognising Russia as a European power and finally securing a strategic buffer between it and its historic invaders.

NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe will effectively abolish Yalta. Russians know it and demand a binding treaty in return for accepting NATO's expansion into their underbelly. It is not an unreasonable demand. Washington, however, will concede no such thing. It disclaims any but peaceful intent toward Russia, so it does not see a point to a treaty. Albright professes peaceful intentions, promises aid and trade, invokes mutual Russian-American peace-making roles in Bosnia as an example of collaboration, has floated the idea of a joint NATO-Russia "Peace Brigade" and is expected to offer Yeltsin a charter enshrining a "practical commitment to consultation and cooperation." No treaty, however.

Apparently, Washington is pursuing its course in violation of promises it made to trusting Russian leaders. Mikhail Gorbachev made the mistake of de-linking vision from policy and letting trust overshadow his diplomacy. In 1990, the last Soviet leader agreed to the reunification of Germany in return for Washington's verbal assurances that NATO would not expand. Like contemporary Arab leaders, in relying on US assurances, Gorbachev ignored the logic of power politics and also disregarded a well-known American tradition of breaking official promises and violating treaties, a phenomenon that describes the tragic history of the Indians in America.

American officials deny making such promises. The archives tell a different story. The transcripts of a talk that took place on 9 February 1990 between James Baker, then US secretary of state, and Gorbachev testify to this. Baker is quoted as saying: "We understand that, not only for the Soviet Union but also for the European states, it is important to have the guarantees that the United States would keep its military presence within the framework of NATO in Germany." The secretary of state went on, "If the US would keep its presence in Germany within the NATO framework, the military presence or jurisdiction of NATO will not be expanded even one inch in an eastern direction."

David Hearst of the British daily *The Guardian*, reports that Jack Matlock, the former US ambassador to Moscow, confirms the existence of "many such transcripts." But such promises melted in the air much like Jimmy Carter's guarantees to Anwar Sadat. American officials' assurance to Yasser Arafat and other Arab leaders that Israel shall not violate the spirit of the accords it signed by "creating new facts on the ground" in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon.

The US is a great power, given to the confident pursuit of its interest as its policy makers perceive it. Washington's moral posturing should be seen as an instrument of policy, not an expression of belief. As imperial powers, Britain and France behaved no differently. The blame must rest with those soft-headed or dependent leaders who take a great power at its word. Pakistani analysts and policy makers who welcome the prospect of US mediation over Kashmir ought to reflect on Washington's superior interests in India. They also should remember the American officials' consistently cynical record of using verbal promises and written "understandings" as diplomatic shortcuts. One such, forged by Philip Habib, preceded the 1982 massacres of Sabra and Shatila. A vision of peace and a degree of mutual trust is essential to successful diplomacy but these must not be separated from intelligent estimations of the interests of friends and adversaries.

American and European officials have been telling newsmen that in the end Moscow will acquiesce to NATO's expansion, albeit grudgingly. They may be right. Russians are hurting these days as Germans hurt after World War I. Their economy is in shambles; their currency is worthless; unemployment is *high*; self-esteem is low. The Russian army has collapsed and the government is ailing so hopelessly that, like Boris Yeltsin, it can barely move. Nuclear weapons are all that remain of the days of Soviet power. An enfeebled and insecure state can view such nuclear weaponry as a crutch. "We shall use it if our security is threatened," said the Russian premier in a hint of future desperation to which American hubris will not give a hearing.

The small and corrupt men who run Russia today lack the vision and courage to defy the US meaningfully because they depend on it for loans and credits. Madeleine Albright warns that NATO shall expand even if Moscow objects. Since they cannot stop Washington, the Russians will sulk and shout but may eventually swallow the sugar-coated palliative Albright pulls out of her handbag. Nevertheless, the US and its NATO allies are playing a risky game. Their Cold War policy of containment has metamorphosed into a policy of encircling Russia and reducing it to dependency, preferably a prosperous one. But Russia is not Japan or Korea. It is too large and resource-filled a country to remain a toothless giant, even in a golden cage.

So, if Moscow's demoralised and divided leaders do acquiesce, their acquiescence may prove more dangerous than did the German surrender to the Treaty of Versailles. Germany, after all, was punished for starting and waging a war. Russia is being penalised for ending one. The penalty is such that it will continue to arouse Russia's historically rooted insecurities and frustrate its ambition as a European power. These are conditions which have yielded wars and revolutions.

The Kremlin's counter-attack

Abdel-Malik Khalil analyses the eruption of machiavellian Muscovite politics

Six months ago Russia was revelling in a dramatic new experience — presidential elections. The main candidates were Boris Yeltsin and Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Russian Communist Party. Yeltsin won, the Communists lost. But even then it was crystal clear that Yeltsin is very sick. Thus, the choice was between a healthy communist and a sick Democrat. Yeltsin's pre-election campaign took away the last of his strength.

It's no surprise that from the moment of his inauguration he has hardly been seen in the Kremlin. The so-called political elite of Russia and world leaders awaited the president's recovery for quite a long time. Now it looks like their patience has run out.

The Communists have protested the deplorable state of affairs. Viktor Ilyukhin, the Communist parliamentary deputy and head of the Duma Security Committee, has tried in vain to get the president to resign.

Recently, the Russian parliament's (Duma's) Speaker Gennady Selznyov accused Yeltsin of trespassing on the Russian constitution, by postponing his address to Russia's Federal Council in the parliament, shifting it from February to March because of ill health. Yeltsin's spokesman declared that by shifting the date of Yeltsin's address no constitutional clause had been broken.

Yeltsin had to present himself before the Russian and international public. Though the Kremlin has not announced when Yeltsin can be expected to return to work full-time, it was decided he should start active ventures: meetings with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; hosting a European Union delegation in Moscow on 3 March; and meeting with US President Bill Clinton at the Russian-American summit planned in Helsinki on 20 March. Next month, Yeltsin is also scheduled to meet with several Russian politicians, make the annual address to the Federal Council on 6 March and meet with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in Moscow.

This sudden, high-pressure schedule has already acquired a name in the Western media: "Kremlin's counter-attack," implying that the Russian president's recent activity is a kind of reaction to NATO's expansion in Eastern Europe. Yeltsin's meeting with Arafat was scheduled to be the first meeting of the Russian president with a foreign leader in the Kremlin after he was elected in summer 1996. In fact, Arafat's visit to Moscow caused a bit of a commotion. The Russian leader, who is barely meeting with Russian political figures, welcomed the Palestinian leader and at the same time canceled a previously arranged appointment with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.


Russian President Boris Yeltsin greets US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Moscow. All the various Russian political groups want to halt NATO's eastward expansion *(photo: Reuter)*

Arafat, during his visit, also met with Chief of Staff Anatoly Chubais, State Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznyov and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yevgeny Primakov as well as the Patriarch of Russia — Alexei II.

This was not the Palestinian leader's first visit to Russia, but this time he arrived as the legal head of the Palestinian Authority: "I welcome you as the generally recognised and legitimately elected leader of the Palestinian people and friend of the Russian people," Yeltsin said in greeting Arafat.

Though the visit was primarily symbolic, it was still important for Moscow: as it signals Russia's active return to the Middle East. It appears that Primakov arranged the visit. Russian diplomats say that the main topic on the agenda was the political role of Russia in the Middle East. Russia has been rapidly losing influence in the region, though formally it still plays the role of co-sponsor of the Middle East peace process. The most recent event in that process — the signing of Palestinian-Israeli agreement on Hebron — was achieved without any significant participation by Russia.

Naturally, Russia would like to strengthen its presence in the region, and Arabs believe Moscow has long been on good terms with Arafat. He was informed that Russia will continue to help establish peace and good relations in the Middle East.

Moscow's role in the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue is limited mainly due to its inability to act as a strong financier. International aid to the Palestinians comes primarily from the European Union, the US and Japan. Presently, Russian help is limited to 100 scholarships for Palestinian students in Russian institutes of higher learning and symbolic technical assistance.

Yeltsin seems to enjoy no exclusive rights to the foreign policy card, however. Both former Security Chief Alexander Lebed and Zyuganov are resorting to foreign relations to bolster their competitive position at home. Lebed visited France last week, accompanied by his wife and a 10-member delegation. He undoubtedly went to France to improve his image in the West. "I consider the 1996 elections a kind of training. In those elections I came third. Next time I intend to win first place."

Lebed visited the European Association of Political Councils and the French Institute of Foreign Affairs, where he gave a speech. He also met high-ranking French officials. He held talks with Russian émigrés. French politicians, journalists and industrialists. All of them were interested in getting aquainted with Lebed. Paris was careful not to repeat past mistakes — to avoid upsetting Mikhail Gorbachev, it once treated Yeltsin rudely when he visited France.

Lebed is viewed with a mixture of fear and distrust. He is seen as an unpredictable leader who has no idea about politics or the economy and who could easily move Russia away from democratic reforms. Perhaps that is why French President Jacques Chirac did not meet with him. People in the small French town of Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises were not sure if Lebed would visit the grave of Charles de Gaulle. Lebed claimed it was impossible for him not to pay tribute to the late French leader, as de Gaulle proved that military men are capable of ruling like seasoned politicians.

Lebed and Albright happened to be visiting Paris at the same time. They did not meet, but the comments they gave to the press were surprisingly similar. Albright stated that she would be very pleased [to meet Alexander Lebed], but she confessed that she didn't have much time in Paris. She said she hoped to meet him in the future. Lebed remarked: "I will try to find time to talk with Madame Albright." One French diplomat told reporters in Moscow that the Kremlin had sent numerous messages to Paris asking French officials not to welcome Lebed in Paris.

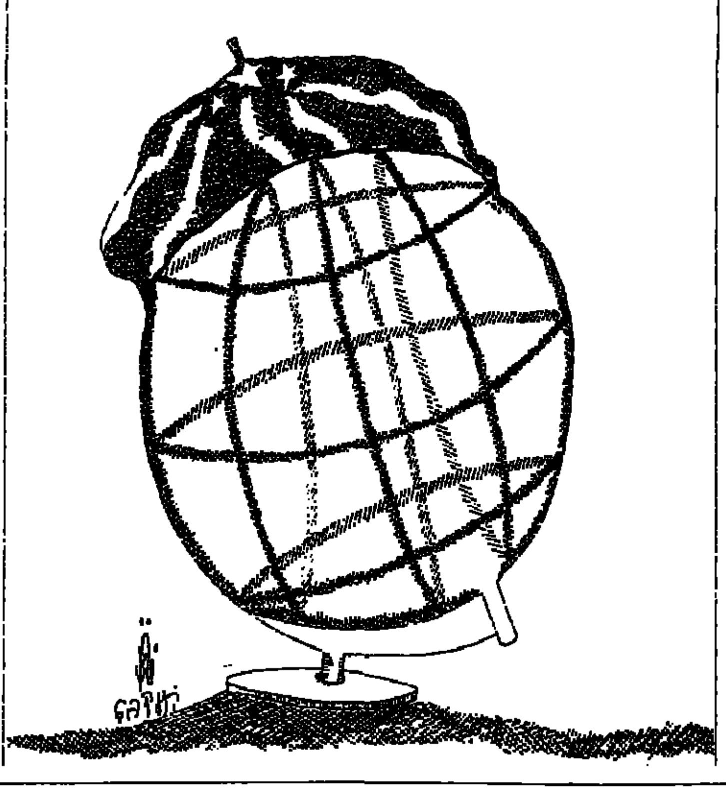
Meanwhile, Zyuganov went to the US to try to convince Americans that he would be the next Russian President.

The Communist leader's programme is quite hectic — he will visit the UN; deliver lectures in several scientific and research centres; give a lecture in New York's prestigious Carnegie Hall; and meet journalists, politicians and businessmen. Zyuganov said he will try to convince the US that his party, despite its previous defeat, is the largest and strongest social and political organisation in Russia. "The post-Yeltsin era is coming soon. Very serious changes are under way," Zyuganov remarked. He also stated that although Russia is in crisis and is weak at present, this state of affairs will not last for long and, consequently, the US must take Russia's interests into account. Zyuganov claimed that NATO's eastward expansion "will be the biggest global mistake after the Second World War." He reiterated Moscow's opposition to NATO's plans saying: "If NATO's eastern expansion comes to pass, it will create new suspicions and push us to look for new allies."

Albright's main purpose in Moscow was to try to persuade the Kremlin to accept NATO's eastward expansion. A few days before Albright's visit to Russia, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel arrived with almost the same intentions. Klaus was disappointed. "Everyone I have met has shown resistance to NATO's expansion," he lamented after meeting with Russia's premier and its defence minister.

Americans assert that NATO will expand eastward no matter what Russia wants. The US secretary of state announced that although there have been no breakthroughs in the dialogue between Russia and NATO on the subject, a "serious and constructive exchange" took place. She said that NATO's intention was "to integrate new democracies, eliminate old hatreds, provide confidence in economic recovery and deter conflict." NATO's aim, she stressed, is not to threaten Russia.







Torn apart by racism

Racism is dividing France in two, writes **Hosny Abdel-Rahim** from Paris

Opponents of France's conservative government's proposed immigration law organised a procession outside the National Assembly on Tuesday evening. Eighty different groups joined forces in a movement led by French film directors. A few days earlier, tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of Paris protesting against the bill. They called for civil disobedience in defiance of the law in the event that parliament approves the new bill.

The bill in question, proposed by French Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debré on the pretext of combating illegal immigration, included a clause that provoked widespread anger. It required French citizens to report the arrival and departure of foreigners staying in their homes. Under pressure from public opinion, the government was compelled to drop the offending clause.

The new bill, which split public opinion, is the latest addition to a host of laws passed in order to further toughen harsh immigration rules. The onslaught began in 1983, when the former socialist government decreed that visa applicants must present an "accommodation certificate". A French host was required to obtain the said certificate from the municipality after a special committee gives its approval following an inspection of the host's house.

Subsequently, former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua was responsible for passing a restrictive immigration law in 1993, facilitating the deportation of immigrants and deeming assistance to an illegal immigrant a crime. When the law was passed in 1993, it provoked widespread anger amongst the immigrant communities and French democratic forces. The then socialist presidential candidate Lionel Jospin pledged to review the law in question.

Following the 1995 underground train bombings, which claimed scores of lives, Justice Minister Jack Toubon exploited the feelings of shock and enacted a law stipulating that a person who assists a foreigner in entering the country or staying illegally will be subject to a FF200,000 fine and six years' imprisonment. Jacqueline Dellombe, a French national, became the law's first victim after she gave shelter to a Zairean immigrant whose residency papers were not in order.

Under the new bill, longtime residents must first prove that they are not a threat to public order and that they maintain a regular residence in France before they can renew their 10-year residency cards. The law also allows police to search workplaces for illegal employees. They could search immigrants' vehicles and confiscate the passports of foreigners lacking required residency papers.

Opponents of the bill argue that it violates the civil liberties of French citizens. They also believe that the bill plays into the hands of the far-right National Front which is pressing for deportations to curb unemployment in the hope of winning right-wing votes in the 1998 legislative elections.

"The real intention of the new bill is to break the process of integration of immigrants established in France," said a statement published by the growing opposition movement to the new bill, which now comprises 80 different groups. In addition to film directors and actors, the movement now includes prominent intellectual figures such as chief editors of *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, the renowned sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, philosophers like Daniel Bensaid, Jack Derrida and Etienne Balibar and the scientists Albert Jaquard and Leon Schivatzenberg, and major trade unionists.

In the face of mounting pressure, the Socialist Party joined the opponents to the law after its initial hesitation. Former socialist leader and Speaker of Parliament Henri Emmanuel acknowledged that the call for civil strife was in order. The federation of judges spoke out in support of opponents of the law. The head of the police union admitted that the existing immigration laws are sufficient. However, he added that it is very difficult for the police to call for civil disobedience except under threat of foreign occupation.

The latest debate has divided France into two camps. Opinion polls published this week indicated that 59 per cent support the modified bill while 39 per cent are against it, and 38 per cent back the call for a civil strike, while 58 per cent oppose it.

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Iron maiden's voyage

Jooneed Khan shows how Washington is attempting to unite Europe, American-style

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's "world tour" has suddenly brought into sharp focus Washington's NATO agenda for the 21st century. It also throws light onto resistance to NATO, not just from a weakened and wary Russia but from within the Atlantic Alliance itself.

Briefing reporters aboard the plane at the start of her "maiden voyage" as secretary, Albright talked about "getting down to a common agenda in both Europe and Asia because we have vital strategic economic interests in both areas." Europe, however, remains by far the overriding concern. "A free, undivided, democratic Europe is one of President Clinton's highest priorities for his second term," she said. Hence, the extension of NATO to include former Warsaw Pact members which Clinton wants to achieve by 1999.

Washington's world view on this issue is hardly modest. "Twice before in this century we faced the challenge, in the aftermath of war, of building a free, secure and united Europe. After World War I, we had the opportunity but too many lacked the vision. After World War II, there was no shortage of vision but the opportunity was denied across half of Europe. Today we have both the vision and the opportunity and together we are building that Europe," she declared, addressing the ministerial meeting of NATO in Brussels last week.

Born Maria Jana Korbel in Belgrade in 1937 where her father, hailing from the Czech village of Letohrad, was ambassador, Albright describes herself as "a child of divided Europe." She has taken on Clinton's NATO expansion agenda with the intensity of a personal crusade from the time she ran the Centre for National Policy in the 1980s. "Having been a child in divided Prague, I want to make the continent whole and free again," she said in Brussels last week.

The US agenda and Albright's crusade are facing resistance from at least three parties: from Western Europe itself, with France in the forefront; from the Mediterranean flank with grumblings from Turkey; and above all from Russia, with denunciations and even dark threats. The view from Moscow was summed up by Boris Berezovsky, deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council and a businessman, in a front-page article last week in the liberal *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* daily.

NATO's expansion agenda "is above all a decision by the West that Russia cannot be integrated," he wrote. "It is a totally aggressive decision with regards to Russia and is also exceptionally dangerous for the West itself because it redivides Europe into two camps," he added. To prevent this from happening, Russia wants a legally binding contract providing it with security guarantees and veto power, in the event of NATO expansion. Moscow says a deal should include a NATO commitment not to deploy nuclear forces and foreign troops on the territories of the new members, the leading candidates being Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

When "the largest, mightiest military machine in the world moves to your borders, it is definitely a threat," said Dmitri Rurikov, a senior foreign policy aide to President Boris Yeltsin who was at the latter's meeting with Albright last week in the Kremlin. The secretary of state's offer of a permanent NATO-Russia force, along the lines of their partnership in Bosnia, and a joint NATO-Russia council for regular dialogue on some security issues, proposed in her Brussels speech, did not mollify her Russian hosts.

The fact is that the US does not want NATO *to enter into any* "binding" deal with Russia. "Russia will have a vote, but not a veto," Albright specified in Brussels. Calling for "new think" on "how NATO is to be viewed in the new era," she wants Moscow to believe that "NATO expansion is not directed against Russia" and that "NATO will not take advantage of the expansion to place new forces near Russia's borders." However, the very idea of a joint NATO-Russia council "is in its infancy", she said, and NATO expansion will proceed apace whether Russia agrees or not. "Russia will not be able to block expansion," she said in Brussels. "We are on a very fast track here," she emphasised during her plane briefing en route to Europe.

Will NATO and Russia have ironed out their differences by then? Much will depend on the Clinton-Yeltsin Summit scheduled in Helsinki next month, with Russia, a military superpower but an economic dwarf, facing the real possibility of a fait accompli in Madrid. Russian threats of stalling on Start-II and even of adopting the option of nuclear retaliation in case of a conventional attack from NATO could then become ominous.

After meeting with Albright last week, Russian officials seemed resigned to NATO's expansion. Nevertheless, they made a point of reiterating their "implacable opposition" to it. "[Our opposition] will remain, whatever the outcome of the negotiations between Russia *and the Atlantic Alliance," the Interfax agency quoted presidential* Press Secretary Sergei Yastrzhembsky as saying. "Russia has a negative position on NATO expansion and will continue to hold this position," Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said. "But we are trying to do everything possible to minimise the complications that may arise if expansion goes ahead," he added.

On the other hand, the fact that the US wants to bring all of Europe — minus Russia — into an enlarged and unified military and security community under NATO while leaving the smaller European Union (EU) to hobble along with its plans for economic union, is not lost on the champions of an independent Europe which would also be a *diplomatic and military superpower. The rivalry has been largely implicit* up to now. Britain continues to lean to the US more than to the EU. German unification has thwarted France's leadership of Europe. But a Franco-German brigade, the first fully European military unit, is deployed with NATO in Bosnia. France also wants a European national to head NATO's Southern Command.

The secretary of state's Paris stop was marked by much kissing and hugging for the media and the polyglot Albright even said, in accentless French, how she was "*vraiment heureuse d'être à Paris*". Disagreements persisted, however. Asked about the Franco-German idea of a 5-power summit including USA, Russia, France, Germany and Britain before the NATO Summit set for July in Madrid, she said it was "more important to focus on substance than on process." A US official told the press that NATO's Southern Command "must remain under American control."

She ignored the subject in her Brussels speech the following day. A US official told the press that while Washington wanted to retain control of NATO's Southern Command, *it could accept the creation* of a "specialised" European Command in Naples. He did not elaborate. In his speech to his NATO counterparts in Brussels, Hervé de Charette, France's foreign minister, called for a "balanced sharing of responsibilities in the Mediterranean between a European and an American command on the same level." He spelled out, for the first time, that "if the disagreement persists," France "would be forced to stay put," meaning that it would not return to NATO's integrated military structure. Finally, on the southern flank, there is the matter of Turkey, which is threatening to veto NATO expansion if its candidacy to the EU continues to be blocked. Asked about this during her airplane briefing, *Albright only voiced US "concern about* increased tension in the Aegean," and said that it is "important for Turkey to remain secular and to have a tie with the West."

This cryptic response hints at the larger issue of NATO's agenda for the Arab-Muslim region extending from the Maghreb to the Mashreq. The issue is of primary concern to the Europeans as well, mainly France, who see North Africa and the Near East as their natural neighbours and are investing much effort in a Euro-Mediterranean partnership. The US insistence on retaining control of NATO's Southern Command aims at frustrating these ambitions. During her trip, Albright often cited Bosnia as a glowing example of Euro-Russian cooperation with the US in the aftermath of the Cold War. "For four years in Bosnia, we came face to face with the future we wish to avoid for Europe," she said in Brussels, "and for the last year, we have seen a glimpse of the future we are trying to build."

In light of Albright's article of faith that NATO expansion "aims at stabilising Central and Eastern Europe, an area out of which two world wars started," one would be hard put to find a more eloquent admission that Bosnia has been a US-NATO laboratory since the end of the Cold War to continue keeping Europe, Russia and the Arab-Muslim region in check, beyond Yalta. The Organisation of Islamic Conference did indeed try to *inject itself in the Bosnian* conflict, without much success. While Europe and Russia are fully involved in the present NATO expansion debate, the Arab-Muslim region is conspicuously absent. Turkey alone carries little weight in Brussels, at a time when the new US secretary of state is "preparing for a new century with hope."

Hope laced with portentous realism, however. In a speech to the General Assembly last November when she was still US ambassador to the UN, Albright said: "The 20th century was hailed as one of unprecedented peace and goodwill, with much talk of collective security and international law. Yet there followed the bloodiest century in human history".



It's all Deng's doing

Gamal Nkrumah reflects on why the South was impressed with Deng Xiaopeng

The manor born Deng Xiaopeng rapidly rose the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party, suffered and survived the indignities of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution and instituted radical economic reforms that changed the face of China forever. Some call Deng's reforms market socialism and others who like to call a spade a spade say it's plain capitalism. Deng himself called it "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

Deng was born in a 14-room mansion to a land-owning family in a remote village called Piafang in the most populous of China's provinces, Sichuan, in southwestern China. Between 1920 and 1925, Deng was employed as a factory worker in France with the vehicle manufacturer Renault. He joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1924, when he was in France.

Like many other Third World leaders of his generation, who came from privileged backgrounds in their home countries and who struggled against racism and poverty while completing their academic studies and leading a proletarian lifestyle in the West, Deng naturally gravitated towards left-leaning and nationalistic ideologies.

"Socialism must eliminate poverty. Poverty is not socialism," was among Deng's most popular statements. Sayings such as this stood in sharp contrast to many of Mao's and his widow's, Jiang Qing, and her Gang of Four. Madame Mao's hangers-on ordered Deng's son, Deng Pufang, thrown from the family's apartment's balcony. Deng spent years nursing his paralysed son.

But he was a survivor and it is remarkable that at the ripe old age of 74, Deng strengthened the power grip of the Chinese Communist Party, reaffirming its central role in the country's political, social and economic development and masterminded bold economic reforms. The year was 1978; and a lesser mortal would never have been able to match Mao Zedong's legacy. Mao's was a hard act to follow. Many believe that Deng's legacy will long outlive Mao's. To us in the South, it is critically important to reflect on why Deng's legacy is popular in many parts of the Third World.

Deng's drastic economic deregulation measures paved the way for Western capital to pour into China on a hitherto unimaginable scale. Foreign direct investment in China rose from nearly naught in the early 1980s to over $40 billion today. Make no mistake, the state-owned sector has witnessed a tremendous enlargement in absolute size. But, the public sector has dwindled considerably in relative terms. While the individual-owned sector reached an annual growth rate of 1,089 per cent in 1984-85, and still registers an average rate of annual increase of 50 per cent today, foreign-owned enterprises registered a 40 per cent growth rate in 1995 and the state-owned sector grew by 10 per cent in 1995.

"[Deng] is like a needle wrapped in cotton," Mao once said of Deng Xiaopeng. Chinese President Jiang Zemin has already declared that his mission is to consolidate Deng's legacy. The People's Liberation Army (PLA), or at any rate its high-ranking and senior officers are among the most important beneficiaries of Deng's economic liberalisation reforms. China's economic growth rate now averages nine per cent annually. The Chinese political and military elite have a big stake in the economic transformations of the country. Their grip on political power is buttressed by their stake in the economic prosperity of China. They control the political structure of the country, formulate and direct policy-making and enjoy the plum pickings of the economic boom. They do not run the Chinese economy, though. Foreign, Chinese and overseas Chinese risk-takers do.

The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party is still the highest decision-making body in the country. The clampdown in *Tiananmen Square was a reminder that Chinese* perceptions of rights and freedoms differ from those in the West. The point is that many in the Third World, in South-East Asia, Africa and the Middle East, still regard the one-party state, or some modified version of it, as the ideal. They believe that the unifying and all-encompassing force is a guarantor of political stability and national cohesion — and one that best advances economic prosperity. Until a more workable system is found, Deng's twin *mantle of economic liberalisation and political* conservatism will continue to have much appeal in developing countries.

[illegible] up the stairs to pay his last respects and Chinese President Jiang Zemin mourns Deng Xiaopeng *(photos Reuter and AFP)*



Women caught up in dirty politics?

How realistic are the expectations of an international conference seeking a partnership between men and women in politics, asks **Mariz Tadros**

"Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics" was the theme of this year's Inter-Parliamentary Conference, held in New Delhi and organised by the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Today a partnership between genders in politics is a giant leap from the days when women were lobbying simply for universal suffrage.

Nowadays women's *representation in* parliament ranges from zero in Kuwait to 40 per cent in Norway. In hopes of finding ways to narrow this gap, 121 men and 119 women belonging to 133 political parties and nine independents from 77 nations attended the IPU conference last week.

Farkhonda Hassan, head of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Development and Local Administration at the Shura Council and secretary-general of the National Democratic Party's Women's Affairs Committee, was the Egyptian delegate at the conference. She noted, "Analysis of trends in women's representation in parliamentary assemblies and local councils at all levels indicates that overall, little progress has been made and substantial gender differences still exist."

Hassan's conference paper underscores that historically, efforts to narrow the gap in gender representation in Egypt have *been anything but consistent*; a 1979 law which allocated women 30 seats in parliament was annulled in 1986 by the Supreme Constitutional Court on the grounds that the law was discriminatory against men.

"This is despite the fact that the 30 seats allocated for women were not at the expense of other seats," pointed out Hassan. Consequently, the number of women in the 1987 parliament dropped to 14 and continues to drop.

Hassan also noted the limited number of female candidates who run for office. The few who are elected or appointed to the parliament manage because of "their active involvement in social work, success in their professional life or their prominent family background... a combination of any of the above factors together with party experience is the gateway to the parliament seat," she explained.

Hassan told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the greatest hurdle to women's full participation in politics is not legislative or inferior abilities of women politicians. Instead, she said, it is social attitudes vis-à-vis women in politics. "This is the one obstacle agreed upon by all delegates attending the conference. We thought the problem was specific to our society, but we found out that it was prevalent in almost all other societies, including industrialised countries. It is the same attitude which perceives politics to be an inherently men's game. What we need is to be able to translate the rights guaranteed to *us by the law into action.*"

In some parts of the world, denial of full political participation for women is built into the legal system: Kuwaiti women still do not have the right to vote or run for office. "The Kuwaiti delegation to the IPU conference told me that it is not yet time to have women in politics, although they are seriously considering negotiating the right of women to vote. And the Kuwaiti delegation claimed that Kuwaiti women don't want to be elected," Hassan said.

The conference's final declaration fell short of spelling out governments' obligation to set a quota for female parliamentarians. "It is clear to us all that quotas are only a necessary evil which should be applied on a temporary basis in order to redress the current dramatic imbalance between men and women and that they should be abolished once the desired effect has been achieved," the statement read.

Many delegates to the conference stressed that increasing female presence in parliaments worldwide by 30 per cent would dramatically improve the political status of women. Margaret Alva, a former minister and member of the Indian delegation said, "I don't see a 50:50 parliament in this country ever... but 33 per cent reservation for women should be, and can be, done now."

Christa Wichterich, a German female activist and journalist, told the *Weekly* that the use of quotas as an instrument for securing minimum representation of women is needed today more than ever before, in the light of the current backlash against women.

"In Germany as in many parts of the world, there are strong political forces which try to push women back and counter the progress that women have made in the 1970s and '80s — and this comes in the midst of an economic crisis when many people are laid off. Once more, women are the losers," Wichterich said.

According to an IPU survey, the number of women parliamentarians had dropped from 14.8 per cent to 11.7 per cent in 1988. "Women comprised only 6.2 per cent of ministerial posts globally, while 62 countries have no women ministers at all," protested President Sam Nujoma of Namibia.

The Nordic countries have the highest average percentage of women elected officials (36.4 per cent), followed much later down the ladder by Asia (13.1), the Western hemisphere (12.75), the Pacific (11.6 per cent), Sub-Saharan Africa (10.4 per cent) while *Arab states scored the worst with only* 3.3 per cent. However, warned Wichterich, even in the Nordic countries, progress is slowing up again. Conservative forces are getting stronger and stronger, she argued.

The fragmentation and diminishing influence of women's movements in the 1990s compared to the strong feminist movements in the 60s, 70s and even 80s in the West is one explanation. Wichterich said, "Women's movements today have lost their drive, they have lost their anger; they are more concerned today with economic issues but in an individualistic way... This is especially true amongst younger generations who think they are better qualified today than their mothers and grandmothers. They don't invest in or trust collective female power anymore."

Wichterich highlighted the opposing attitudes of the younger and older generations of women in Germany. The former believe that merit, not gender, should be the deciding criteria in their representation in parliament. But the latter group, many of whom have battled for years to be on par with males, believe it is a necessary mechanism to break through the glass-ceiling.

The fact that women politicians do not necessarily represent the rights and interests of women is not surprising. Many are token elements in political parties while others have abandoned their cause and been co-opted into the mainstream political status quo.

The ideological clash between the so-called femocrats and the female activists has been a hindrance to the advancement of women's interests on a policy-making level. "A strong linkage between women who have been elected into office and women's groups must be maintained. This link is often lost", Wichterich said.

Egypt's Hassan described the IPU conference as a "landmark" since parliaments will be expected to approve the conference recommendations by April. Yet some remain disillusioned with the negative manipulation of political feminism hidden beneath the overt statements in support of women's political participation.

Call it eco-efficiency or environmental management, but for industry, what it boils down to is both saving money and the environment

Shopping for green high-tech

For those bent on being green and clean, Environment '97, was a one-stop shop for the latest in environmental technology. **Mahmoud Bakr** and **Sherine Nasr** went window shopping

Developing the kind of understanding of environmental awareness necessary to promote economic growth is neither a simple nor quick task. But if the First International Conference and Trade Fair on Environment Management and Technology was a gauge, then significant strides were made on this path to prosperity. Popularly known as Environment '97, the conference not only highlighted the need to develop and promote sound environmental policies, but also offered prospective buyers a melange of environmentally-sound products and technology which they can incorporate into their day-to-day business operations.

With representatives of nearly all sectors of the Egyptian economy sitting alongside business representatives and officials from industrialised nations such as the US and the UK, the forum was ripe for the exchange of solutions and ideas, as well as the introduction of new projects, research results on key issues such as hazardous waste disposal, bio-diversity and pollution. But over and above the exchange of theories and ideas, the trade fair portion of Environment '97 was instrumental in translating the theory into reality, as high-tech product exporters competed to demonstrate and sell their energy conservation and natural gas conversion systems. Also spotlighted through these corporate stalls were coastal protection equipment and off-shore oil field maintenance and repair techniques. The trade fair also provided small, local enterprises with a prime opportunity to expand their business by sub-contracting with international corporate giants.

Although the technology on display at the trade fair is viewed as an integral part of the new emphasis on conducting business in a manner compatible with environmental preservation and prevention, the prices are not cheap.

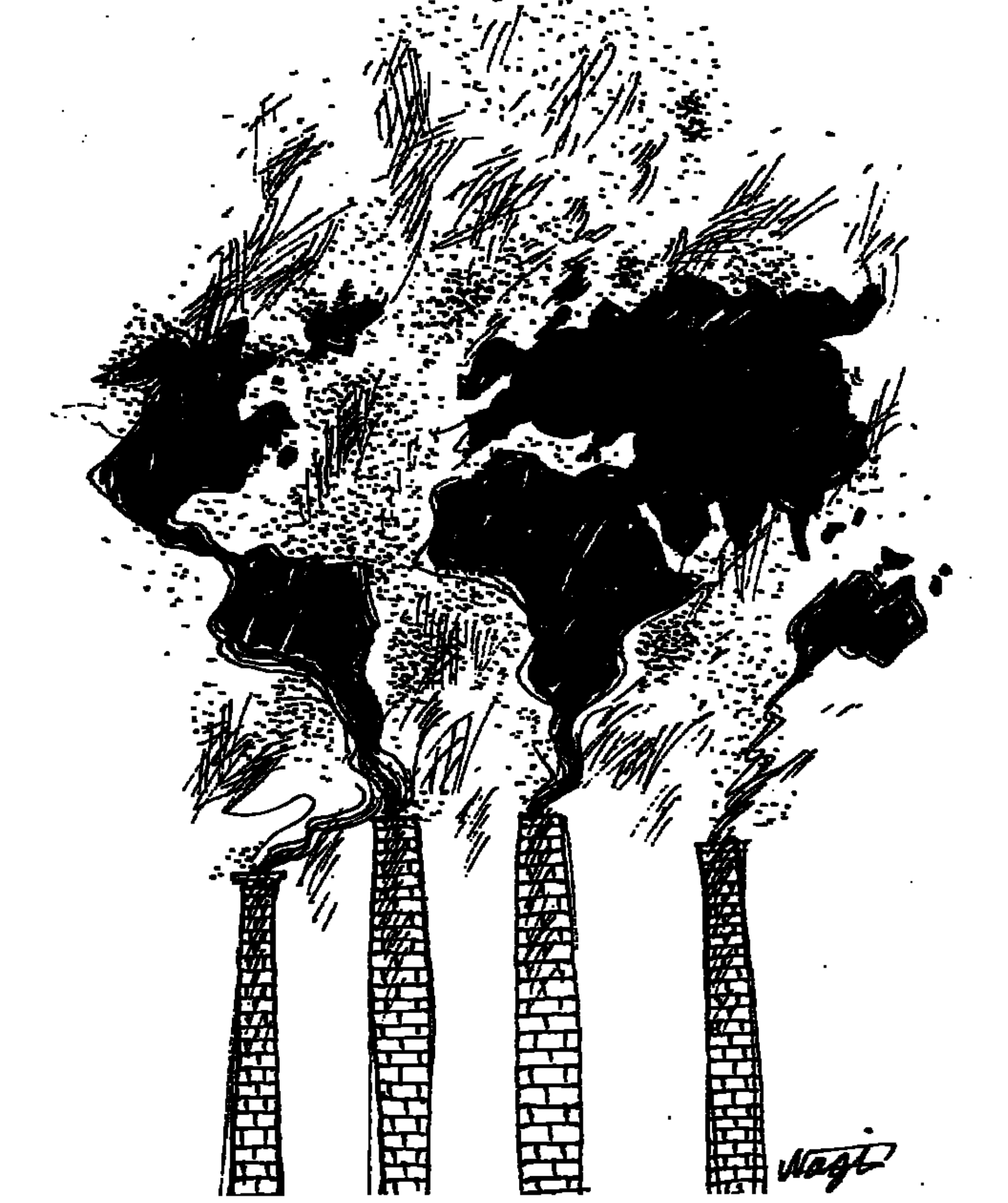
The price of a small wastewater plant seemed prohibitive mainly due to the fact that this kind of technology is monopolised by the US, Germany and France, but according to Mohamed Shaaban, a representative of an Italian company specialising in waste water treatment, "the cost will be recouped quickly because recycled water is much cheaper than that sold by the Egyptian government in the Red Sea area."

Also featuring prominently on display in the fair were examples of alternative vehicle fuel conversion programmes, compressed natural gas (CNG) fuelling station product lines, air protection technology, soil protection technology, biofertilisers and plant nutrients, medical, waste water and solid waste management systems.

Concurrent with the trade fair portion of Environment '97 were numerous technical seminars and lectures which afforded roughly 115 speakers from all over the world the opportunity to present the latest breakthroughs in environmental research.

This part of the conference was designed to help translate the theoretical into the applied. According to the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency's (EEAA) head, Salah Hafez, the seminars and lectures sought to "adapt and examine the possibility of implementing in Egypt the latest advances in the field of environmental management."

As a whole, however, the conference underscored the need to bring to Egypt new environmental technology. "Our main goal was to provide a meeting ground for producers of new environmental technology and those who may be potential consumers," said Tarek Geneina, director of the EEAA Technical Cooperation Office for the Environment. "Therefore, the aim was also to encourage deal-making."



Green saves all

Trying to save money, their reputations and the environment, companies are increasingly turning to eco-efficiency programmes as the solution, reports **Sherine Nasr**

Chairmen of several private and public sector companies, members of the international donor community, along with representatives from various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government officials gathered in a two-day workshop to discuss eco-efficiency as a means of boosting economic performance and increasing Egypt's competitiveness on the international market.

"Eco-efficiency is quality management for a better economy and a more successful sustainable development," said Richard Sykes, director of Shell International.

This statement takes on particular importance given the fact that free market economics have become part and parcel of a revamped new world order. To carve out a niche for themselves and expand their business, agreed officials attending the conference, Egyptian companies are obliged to subscribe to certain quality and environmental standards.

"We will not be able to operate in different parts of the world unless we become eco-efficient," said Hazem Bashaat, vice-chairman of the Association of Enterprises for Environmental Conservation. "In other words, we need to have an environmental policy." Consumers, he added, are becoming more aware that they should only buy environmentally-friendly products and, therefore, the company producing these goods has to have a sound environmental protection policy.

Mustafa Tolba, former director-general of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), pointed out that Egypt is in the process of launching industrial sector eco-efficiency programmes. "Over the last decade, there was a misconception that protecting the environment is a costly endeavour," said Tolba. "This explains why many companies were reluctant to carry out eco-efficient programmes."

"However, environmental management is now viewed as a means of realising more profits rather than a cumbersome cost," noted Sykes.

Two cases in point, stated Tolba, are Japan and Germany. Both countries have managed to boost economic growth while linking it to environmental conservation. "They have managed to achieve an economic growth rate of between 0.8 and 1.8 of their GDP through the application of energy conservation policies," he said.

Applying sound environmental practices has enabled Japan's Sony Corporation to use 14 per cent less material and 40 per cent less plastic. Similarly, the US automotive and defense giant, General Motors, has managed to realise $3 million in profit solely through the use of recycled plastic.

These examples, however, are merely a drop in the bucket compared to the money that can be made and saved through the implementation of environmentally-conscious business practices. "There is a potential of $750 million to be gained through pollution prevention measures [in business]," noted Serge De Klebnikoff, director of Development at the World Bank.

Environmental and eco-efficiency policies are of particular importance to petroleum sector companies. To this end, Roger Patey of Shell, Egypt, staged a slide show during the conference, illustrating the condition of the sites before, during and after drilling. "Because it is important to be eco-efficient in all our environmental practices, we make sure that the drilling site is left as we have taken it and that there is the least damaging impact," he said.

On a more general level, participants agreed that environmental protection must become increasingly integrated into corporate planning and management. It should be anchored in the organisational structure of a company and be included in all strategy and planning decisions. Following these rough guidelines will make it possible to bring together ecological and business concerns.

Many such projects, aimed at reducing the levels and impact of industrial pollution, have already moved from the drawing-board to the implementation stage, with the help of financing by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). "Pollution prevention assessments were conducted in over 45 industrial facilities," stated USAID Director John Westley. "Over 50 per cent of these facilities have implemented recommendations and have significantly reduced waste water flows and pollutant discharges and saved money."

"If we spend LE50 million to rid Cairo's air of lead, I think this will be the best investment for the coming generations," said Salah Hafez, head of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA).

The EEAA head was keen to stress his agency's commitment to eco-efficiency. "Eco-efficient projects will have a return to the factory and the whole community as well," he said.

One of the first Egyptian companies to adopt an eco-efficeint production policy is the Afri-Medical Corporation. "We have realised that the only way to become a market pioneer is to be environmentally responsible," said Amin Hagar, the company's general manager.

Hagar explained that Afri-Medical had to make the hard choice between starting a new production line or applying pollution prevention techniques. "We chose to adopt an environmentally-friendly strategy, and we were certain that the costs will be recouped over a period of three years," he said.

Prior to applying the new technique, the company used to release 300 tons of organic solvents per year into the atmosphere, as well as massive quantities of gypsum dust which was produced during the manufacturing process.

"It was imperative to launch an action plan, to have personnel training and to select the proper technology to apply," Hagar said.

The company applied for a loan from the KFW Bank in Germany which extended a low interest, long-term loan of LE2.5 million. "The technique stopped almost 85 per cent of the organic solvents from going into the atmosphere and, as a result, saved the company 50 per cent of the solvent's overall cost," he said. Moreover, by implementing this programme of action, the company was able to secure the ISO 9002 and the CE-Mark, a seal of quality management which only five other Egyptian pharmaceutical companies have earned. This distinction has boosted the company's image and has allowed it to increase its exports to Europe.

Tourism is the second major field where eco-efficiency is playing a key role in preserving the nation's cultural and natural assets. "Six years ago, the financiers investing in projects along the Red Sea coast had but little concern for the environment," said Magdy Salah of the Tourist Development Authority (TDA). "Consequently, the damage to these fragile ecosystems was beyond repair," he said.

In order to prevent more destruction to the Red Sea area, where almost 60 per cent of the country's tourist development is concentrated, a coastal zone management programme was initiated under the supervision of the EEAA.

From the implementation of the programme came the publication of an atlas of environmental resources, an environmental impact assessment manual for tourism projects to be carried out along the coast and, more importantly, a set of environmental guidelines for diving sites.

Good on paper

Could dreams of a cleaner Cairo by 1998 amount to little more than pipe dreams, asks **Eman Abdel-Moeti**

With more than a little fanfare, last week's international environmental conference, Environment '97, closed without a glitch. For days, participants listened to lectures, attended seminars and looked over displays that spotlighted not only the latest environmental conservation technologies, but also stressed heavily the need to include environmental management as an inseparable part of boosting economic prosperity and development.

But, as many delegates noted, promoting the kind of environmental awareness necessary for the successful realisation of sustainable development is neither an easy nor cheap endeavour. In short, not only is the technology expensive, but many local industries, which previously had little concern for environmental management, may find this new concern for environmentalism in Egypt a bitter pill to swallow.

For better or for worse, however, industry representatives now have little choice to comply. In this light, Environment '97 can actually be viewed as a means to an end — the end being enforcing Law no. 4 of 1994.

This environmental law, which was drawn up by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), aims at rapidly and radically cleaning up not only the environment, but also the way in which the industrial sector does business. Moreover, although it was not the first environmental law to be passed, it was the first to be taken seriously by industry, in part due to the fact that it was strongly backed by the government and, more to the point, because it offers incentives to companies that comply as well as penalties to those that fail to do so.

In part this system of incentives and penalties is the backbone of Law no. 4. Under the terms of this legislation, industrial enterprises are given a three-year probation/adjustment period which ends in 1998. During this period, companies are expected to comply with new, more realistic emission standards, waste disposal and recycling programmes.

For the EEAA, which is responsible for the planning, follow-up, monitoring and implementation of the law, getting this law approved marks perhaps the first concrete step taken towards reversing a nearly 40-year-old policy of environmental neglect on the part of both the government and industrial concerns.

Linked to basic industrial reforms, such as factory renovations and filter replacement on smokestacks, which were mandated by the law, the EEAA also kept in mind the old adage that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Under the law, new plants and industrial companies are required to procure EEAA construction permits prior to building. This step is intended to forestall the possibility that the factories to be built have a negative impact on their surrounding environment. And, like its predecessors, Law no. 48 of 1982 and Law no. 93 of 1962, Law no. 4 also includes clauses dealing with protecting the Nile and all water resources from pollution, as well as setting safety standards for heavy industry waste disposal.

What sounds good on paper, however, does not always translate well into reality. "Unfortunately, industrialists face many difficulties trying to comply with the law," commented Saleh Wanees, general manager of the Industrial Waste Control Department of the General Organisation for Sanitary Drainage for Greater Cairo (GOSD). "The safety standards set by law are so rigid that compliance is next to impossible."

To resolve this problem, a committee comprising of specialists from the EEAA, the Ministry of Health and the GOSD was established to revise the regulations while still ensuring that they complied with internationally-accepted standards. But, for bureaucratic reasons, these amendments have yet to be approved.

Wanees is disappointed. "If the regulations are not amended before the 1998 deadline, the industrial sector will never be able to meet its target date," he said.

To date, industrial waste has been disposed of in canals such as El-Khashab in Ma'sara, Shebin El-Qanater in the working class district of Shubra El-Kheima and in Mostorod. These canals, which have been the breeding ground for the many diseases in surrounding areas, will now be covered with sand. Consequently, factories will be obliged to dispose of their waste through the sewage system, thus ensuring compliance with Law no. 4.

Waste disposal, unfortunately, is but one of several obstacles that must be overcome if industry is to meet the 1998 deadline. Also posing an environmental and health hazard are cement, fertiliser and chemical plants which, have filters, but lack the necessary maintenance for them. Moreover, many of these plants have neither the technology required to reduce the pollution resulting from the production process, nor the know-how to recycle their waste.



Huge levels of air pollution plague Cairo (photo AFP)

Eco-concerns, a pretext?

A panel discussion that took place in Cairo last week shed light on developed countries' use of environmental awareness as a restrictive trade measure. **Shereen Abdel-Razek** reports

WWF

The relationship between trade, environment and sustainable development, and how to minimise the gap between them, was the theme of an international panel discussion held on 23-25 February under the auspices of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a non-governmental organisation. The meeting, the second of the WWF's Expert Panel on Trade and Sustainable Development (EPTSD) since the project was started in October 1996, followed recent debates over the use of production-based trade measures in determining the exportability of a product.

The EPTSD was formed to design innovative policy packages and integrated instruments to minimise conflicts between trade, environment and development initiatives. As such, its work focuses on resolving problems related to environmentally-damaging production methods and the way in which developed countries view these methods as a trade barrier.

Although developing countries, in their bid to comply with environmental standards, are constrained by limited financial and technical abilities, developed nations have remained quite rigid in their demands on environmental measures used in the production of a product prior to its export. For example, the US government imposed restrictions on Mexican tuna imports on the basis that the fishing methods used resulted in the death of dolphins. Similarly, Germany, despite the fact that production methods had no trans-national impact, banned the import of Indian leather because its production involved the use of certain preservatives.

Developing countries have repeatedly complained about these restrictions. Magda Shahine, minister counsellor in Egypt's permanent mission to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and one of the panelists at the EPTSD forum, gave voice to the concerns of developing countries.

"As an Egyptian, I represent the developing countries' perspective which rejects the developed countries' approach to imposing environmental requirements on exported goods," she said. Shahine stated that so long as the production methods do not affect the physical characteristics of the final product, it should not be rejected on the international market.

Citing the textile industry as an example, she argued that the kind of pesticides used during the cultivation of cotton is not a relevant concern if the chemicals do not have a negative impact on the garments.

Shahine went on to note that there are several internationally-agreed upon technical regulations relating to trade and trade promotion. Therefore, environmental concerns should not be used as a means of objecting to a product simply because it is not "eco-labelled" or because it uses a certain kind of packaging.

Moreover, noted Shahine, according to the principles agreed upon at last year's environmental conference in Brazil, no country has the right to dictate how a product should be produced.

Rather than impose sanctions on developing countries to comply with these standards, Shahine suggested that they should be given additional incentives for compliance. For example, additional finance and sound technology could be provided by developed countries to encourage developing nations to adopt new, environmentally-friendly prodiction methods. "Trade measures and sanctions are not the cure for all environmental ills," she stated.

"What the developing world really needs is to use market liberalisation and free market access as a tool to increase their exports and, subsequently, the volume of hard currency needed to upgrade environmental preservation mechanisms," she explained.

Salah Hafez, head of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), the nation's highest environmental body, agreed with Shahine that the new restrictions are a financial burden on developing countries. But, he added, some of these restrictions can be considered as incentives if developing countries can utilise them to secure a bigger market share.

While compliance with new environmental criteria, said Hafez, is considered by some as an additional cost for business, in some sectors, these costs may be recovered.

In other sectors, such as garbage recycling, these measures are actually a source of substantial profit. "These kinds of projects, known as win-win projects, are both environmentally sound and yield a sizable commercial benefit," he explained.

On a domestic level, Hafez added, Egypt is trying to upgrade its environmental conservation policies to meet the new challenges on both the international and domestic markets. To this end, the EEAA has submitted a draft law to the Ministry of Finance, providing for market-based incentives to those industries committed to environmental conservation.

This same legislation, however, penalises those industries which, in the course of the their operations, harm the environment. In many cases, these penalties are in the form of compensation paid by the company to a proposed environmental conservation fund.

Other measures, such as raising the price of leaded gasoline in relation to unleaded gasoline, have also been undertaken to promote a shift towards environmental awareness.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

Close up

Salama A. Salama

Operation salvage

The environment receives little attention from government policies and planning. Foreign organisations and nations stipulate that funded development and economic projects conform with environmental requirements; if not for these, one is tempted to think, environmental issues would be ignored or relegated to the bottom of the list of priorities.

The government promulgated an environmental statute two years ago, granting the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Authority (EEAA) the competence to implement this law, and most universities and governorates hastened to set up environmental departments or divisions. A number of seminars were held, and NGOs concerned with the protection of the environment proliferated, alerting public opinion to threats to the environment posed by agriculture, industry or the behaviour of private citizens. It appears, however, that decision-makers, even at the ministerial level, remain only superficially convinced of the need to preserve the environment. In many circles, attention to environmental issues is mainly cosmetic; environmental preservation is considered a luxury, a waste of investments and funds.

The EEAA does not participate in policy on touristic investments in coastal areas, although destroying the environment in these areas is equivalent to killing the goose that lays the golden egg. In Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh, investors have realised that neglecting the environment has been a curse in both the short and long term. They are now attempting to repair the damage caused by haphazard development. But the same mistake was made when ministerial committees responsible for the planning and execution of the Toshki project were formed, although one would have hoped for the implementation of scrupulous environmental preservation measures in this case. None of the committees have shown the slightest sign of concern over the project's potential consequences; nor have they even asked the numerous environmental experts in Egypt to study the issue.

In most of the environmental projects being carried out — the creation and supervision of nature reserves, the use of clean technology in the petroleum industry, or research into the elimination of industrial pollution; even, indeed, in waste disposal techniques — the local authorities make no effort to encourage environmental preservation procedures unless prompted, and funded, by international organisations. The preservation and restoration of our antiquities, the salvage of our cultural and architectural heritage, are subject to the same indifference.

Many environmental experts and scientists feel frustrated and despondent at the state's vacillations when confronting environmental issues.

We are, of course, aware of the financial burdens the state has to bear in many areas, but environmental issues are not a luxury that can be postponed, nor a burden easily put down. It is time to train many officials at the various levels of decision-making, even at the legislative level; now is the time to inform them that environmental issues constitute a major challenge. They must also realise that any project, big or small, cannot be judged a success if we do not ascertain its impact on the environment.



Soapbox

No surprises

The victims of Nazi atrocities were predominantly Jewish and Catholic. The historiography of the Holocaust, however, has focused entirely on the Jewish victims, who have been painstakingly traced and registered, while others who suffered the same fate were ignored. The families of Jewish victims, unlike others who suffered and died at the hands of the Nazis, perpetuated the memory of the Nazi atrocities in films and books. Unlike others whose families were massacred — the Armenians are a case in point — they are being compensated to the tune of billions of dollars.

It is, therefore, highly unlikely that a descendant of Jewish victims of the Holocaust can suddenly discover her parents' identity late in life, as did recently the new US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright. This is even more unlikely in the case of someone, like Albright, who was investigated twice for two key government posts.

Assuming that Albright's recently discovered Jewish and Holocaust decent is genuine, however, the question is: Will this sudden revelation affect US policy in the Middle East? On one hand, the discovery could mean that Albright will be spared accusations of anti-Semitism and will be fair, firm and just. She can be "pro-truth", even if that truth is on the Arab side.

The other option is that, since human emotions reduce objectivity, she could choose to be "pro-Israel" — what Zionists call a "warm Jew".

While I hope Madeleine Albright will be pro-truth, political observation proves that US politicians can afford to be objective about the Middle East only after they leave office. But I would guess that the shrewd Georgetown professor will be, above all, "pro-Madeleine".



This week's Soapbox speaker is a former chairperson of the Foreign Relations Committee in Parliament.

Laila Takla

Building the electronic wall

Watching television, **Edward Said** discovers, affords insight into pacification by remote control

For the past seven or eight weeks I have been plagued by a series of infections that inflicted more or less persistent pain on me, in addition to the necessity of remaining at home all the time, unable to teach my classes (which had to be canceled for the semester), and enduring the kind of despondency and discouragement that a patient feels when he believes that he has suffered too long and too much. Despite that, I was able to experience something of the effect of what it must be like for an American to watch television for long periods of time. In too much discomfort to read anything for very long, unable to listen to or play music, I found myself all too frequently resorting to the handy television remote control which so easily and seductively seems to bring the world to life on a small screen with the mere pressing of a button. People who live in New York must subscribe to a cable service (there is only one, a monopoly owned by Time-Warner) since without the cable the presence of so many high buildings makes even minimum reception totally impossible. So as you lie on your bed of pain you have flitting before you no less than about 75 channels, with films, news, sports, documentaries, talk shows, and many more varieties than I can enumerate here, available 24 hours a day. At first, I derived pleasure from looking at old movies — a few weeks ago one channel offered 24 hours of 1940s Universal films about the Middle East, most of them starring John Hall, Maria Montez, Sabu, Yvonne de Carlo, and Turhan Bey, movies like *Sudan, The Arabian Nights, Scheherezade* — in which Hollywood's conception of what the Orient was supposed to be like is given amusing, if grotesque, realisation (to simulate the Middle East in these now long-forgotten films one always had to have lots of sand, galloping horses, cruel sultans, and dancing girls); but after watching three or four of them I couldn't bear to watch one for even a second more.

In what turned out to be a relatively short time I had exhausted my patience with television. One had to wait hours, perhaps days, for a decent, usually imported, film or documentary to appear: the chat shows were tiresome, unbelievably stupid, gossip; the news as delivered by CNN, the national networks or the local channels, was almost entirely about the United States, and usually copied from one network by another, CNN I found unwatchable since there are too many commercial breaks, and too many shows about cooking and fashion to be worth the time spent waiting for an item of real news; endless sports programmes proliferate, usually basketball and football, but are punctuated with all kinds of bizarre new attractions like women's boxing and barefoot water-skiing.

Most of the airwaves, however, are polluted with three types of programmes. One is a general category that purports to be entertainment. This runs the gamut from cartoons to soap operas to weekly hour-long dramas and films. Intended to appeal to audiences of twenty million and more, these are usually sensationalist, extremely simple to follow, sentimental, and vacuous. Most Americans tend to watch these shows round the clock, even as they work, and certainly after coming home from work one imagines these silent gatherings around the TV set replicated all over the country, with lots of popcorn-eating, beer-drinking and the like, as entire families sit around the main TV set (every house, except for the very poor, has more than one set), transfixed by what is being watched. Second, is the vast category of talk shows, in which an interview takes place between a "host" and various invited guests, usually celebrities, but often people with peculiar problems (women who go out with their sons' girlfriend, men who always fall in love with extremely fat women, etc), or "news-makers," that is politicians, or important visiting dignitaries like Princess Diana, but also Benjamin Netanyahu. So self-referential has television become and so powerful are its personalities that very frequently the top journalists interview each other, with the result that "the news" is what these characters say it is. Lastly there are the religious programmes, which probably outnumber the other two categories. The enormous proliferation of these religious programmes is one small index of how the United States is by far the most religion-obsessed country in the world. According to a recent poll, 88 per cent of the American public believes that it is loved by God. Television religion includes all the standard denominations enacting their services, but that is minuscule compared to the weird cults and sects that proclaim their secret pathway to God on the air the rest of the time: from the Christians who believe that a true understanding of God is available through a decoding of the structure of the Great Pyramid at Giza (I have actually seen these people on television, so you must believe me!) to the various faith healers who purport to make the blind see and the lame walk in full view of millions of witnesses.

Even this quick summary is enough to suggest that American television, now exported all over the world, is, from the point of view of a moderately well-educated individual, a deeply unsatisfying source of information or, in the real sense of the word, of entertainment. For one, because of its extraordinary prodigality of programming and availability, it imposes on the mind a sense of dependency and passivity. Most people feel that they can avoid, or perhaps even solve, their problems by simply flipping on the television, and getting lost in the daydreams and fantasies that very soon acquire both a familiarity and reality that are more attractive than one's own world. As for growing children, there is nothing easier for parents than to plant their three or four-year old in front of the TV set as a way of pacifying them for hours. In all sorts of obvious ways then, television can become a kind of drug, to be used with greater dependency once the habit gets started. Above all, from the perspective of someone who is interested in why so few people in this society — or, for that matter, in the Arab world — refuse to accept the various abuses and lies of their governments, and why we now seem to be led by mediocre leaders who are simply not doing their jobs correctly, television provides an answer. It disarms critical or moral thought by its totality, by its all-enveloping, easy accessibility, and by its underlying ideological message, which is that this is America, the greatest society on earth, where all problems are as easy to deal with as opening a bottle of Coca-Cola.

I do not at all want to suggest that television does not present anything except silly farces: on the contrary, local news channels, for instance, are mainly full of murders, rapes, fires and natural disasters. The medium has an amazing way of distorting reality so that, where news programmes are concerned you get the feeling that, because it is on TV, a story is therefore real; conversely, if it is not, then it does not exist. I would say that the percentage of news reported contains at most three or four per cent about international issues, most of them, however, usually reported because of a crisis which, as soon as it passes, erases the issue from memory. Rwanda and former Yugoslavia make extremely rare appearances these days; in most minds, they are now only associated with the idea of "trouble" and little else. But by comparison, the amount of time devoted by television (and in effect by all the media) to the various O.J. Simpson trials has distended and bloated the story into something beyond all reason or even emotion. It has become virtually impossible to see the world as not principally about Simpson, his lawyers, victims, and legal predicaments. The problem is that the story itself is fed not only by TV itself, but by a public that cannot get enough of what in reality is a sordid case of wife-beating and murder. In other words, the mind has lost its power to resist an onslaught of irrelevance and gross distortion of reality.

I am convinced, therefore, that television dependency has played a great role not only in inducing an absence of critical thought but, even more crucially, in reducing the capacity of the mind for precise and exact uses of language, language being what it is we think with and in, when we think about our world. Television images are a form of magic that work by quick shifts from one place, image, time and subject to others; they depict the world as subject to sudden magnifications and equally unlikely arrests, that give us a reassuring sense that what we have before us, whether as soap operas, news broadcasts, sports spectacles, or journalists chatting authoritatively to each other, is the world, and its life is being lived, explained, and transmuted for us, without any effort on our part. Individual consumers of TV have no choice in what is before them, although of course they can switch from one programme or channel to another. Gradually, then, the repertoire of images and verbal discourse derived from television becomes a substitute for the processes of one's own mind, whose capacities, laboriously built up through education, begin to atrophy and then finally give up. Instead of thinking concretely and self-consciously, then, you rely instead on what you heard or saw on television, which simply floods in as you are looking for a word or thought. It articulates your thoughts, provides much of the vocabulary, constructs sequences, and reduces complexity to simple images.

In this way, over the years, the image of the Arab or Muslim has been essentialised down to the one simple meaning: terrorist. For the time being, I am sorry to say that we are stuck with that identity in the American consciousness, regardless of how moderate and concessive our leaders appear, and irrespective of how many times they appear for photo opportunities at the White House. It should also be kept in mind that there is virtually nothing — and I mean this literally — in what one sees on television that can provide a viewer with even the possibility of questioning the ideas that the United States is God's country, that it has ever done anything wrong, and that it is basically a force for good in the world. The phrase "our country" or the pronoun "we" has acquired an unassailable positive force, so that even the word "America" in common discourse is an ideological term, not just a simple national designation, and is used as such on television. Most individual vocabularies today therefore tend to be assaulted constantly by pre-packaged terms like "we are going forward," "the great opportunities that God has given us," and so forth, most of them safeguarding unrestrained capitalism even though the majority's interests are being harmed. A perfect instance of this is the chorus of attacks on "government" which now means "big government," i.e. socialism. During the abortive debate three years ago about health care — one must remember that over 45 million people have no health coverage, since the government doesn't provide any; one must either be wealthy or enrolled in a corporate health plan — the one alternative never seriously discussed was what every other country on earth has, namely national health insurance. Here, even the thought was never analysed because that kind of national medical care had been polluted and transformed into the idea of socialism, a concept which still has a very potent negative resonance for the average American.

What I have been saying about America is also true about the Arab world, where learning in school, radio and television, plus an almost completely corrupt or at least counterfeit public discourse on matters having to do with the state of society, make it very difficult to express oneself clearly and concretely. The noted West Bank educational activist Munir Fashe some years ago analysed the prose produced by high school students. Two things stood out in every case: one, the student's inability to write concretely about any subject; two, a total incapacity to write about oneself directly. Thus, when requested, for instance, to write specifically about what the student saw and felt walking to school, the young people were only able to say extremely general things about the weather, the street, or the need to go to school, all of them very conventional, and very imprecise as far as that individual was concerned. Very often the framework was provided by a few political slogans — we are winning our independence, the importance of a Palestinian state, etc. Some of this of course had to do with the difficult circumstances of life for these students, but the loss of precision and concreteness, the tendency to give up clear conceptual thinking and process, are also to be found in the prose of my students here, in a major American university. The phenomenon, therefore, is a universal one, and of central importance during the coming years when, of course, the power and influence of electronic communication in all its forms will grow and acquire more authority over the individual mind and will.

Thus the worldwide market system — call it the IMF or World Bank model — seems to have produced alongside itself a communications apparatus whose effect is to lessen resistance, whether to political or to commercial ideas, on the part of the individual. For me, the test of the individual consciousness is how quickly, or easily, it can be made to accept what is presented on television or in public discourse, even though the reality is not only more complex but totally different. The great precedent in the United States was the 1991 Gulf War which, quite aside from Saddam Hussein's illegal occupation of Kuwait, was fought as a global projection of US power. That war was in effect a war without a popular constituency in the United States. Between September and December of 1990, a consensus was built up laboriously over television, persuading citizens that Saddam was an evil demon who threatened "our" freedom, and that his aggression must be stopped, by "us." No one asked about our aggressions or who exactly had appointed us the guardians of world order. Most minds were prepared by years of ideological insistence that "we" always did the right thing, and that sordid economic, political, or strategic motives could not be attributed to "our" actions. More to the point, the war was planned and fought as a clean, "surgical" electronic war on television; viewers were persuaded that, yes, there were American forces in the desert, but since they were being watched at home the war itself was without "real" damage or cost to anyone, except those evil Iraqis. The frightening thing was that, for the few who actively opposed and spoke against the war, it was impossible to break through into the media, which had created an electronic wall around what was being done in cooperation with the government.

In short, an imprecise, not very concrete hold on language and reality produces a more easily governable, accepting citizen, who has become not a participant in the society but an always hungry consumer. Literate, critical education has an extraordinarily important role to play in providing the instruments of resistance to this and, it must be said plainly, in providing a means of self-defence. Otherwise the picture of billions of people whose volition has been pacified and whose consciousness and will have been usurped is a truly frightening one.

Reflections

By Hani Shukrallah

Something wrong in the state of Denmark?

One thing both sides of the Copenhagen debate in Egypt might come to agree upon, once the currently frenzied tone of discussion settles, is that the whole episode has been an exercise in futility — at least for the time being, and in terms of the declared objectives of its Egyptian and Israeli protagonists. The Palestinian and Jordanian participation seems of little significance in what was from the start an essentially Egyptian-Israeli affair.

As far as I can discern, the Egyptian participants had two main inter-linked objectives: first, to undermine the position and influence of the Israeli right wing, deepening the rupture between that half of Israeli society which presumably supports the current peace process, and the other half that opposes it; secondly, to assuage the so-called security concerns, or fears, of the Israelis by building bridges of dialogue and cooperation between Egyptian and Israeli "civil societies".

Some of the Israeli participants may have shared the Egyptian objectives, particularly the second one, but it seems clear that, insofar as the leader of the Israeli side, and indeed the main driving force behind the whole Copenhagen deal, David Kimche, is concerned, the Israeli objective appears to have been both concrete and precise. For him, Copenhagen represented "the first dent" in the Egyptian cultural boycott — in "the wall of hostility that the Egyptian opposition, whether Nasserite or Islamist, has built" — as he put it succinctly last week in an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*'s Graham Usher. A careful reading of the various accounts of "the road to Copenhagen", called the Louisiana Initiative by its protagonists, provides considerable evidence to support the conclusion that it was Kimche's agenda that, in fact, prevailed. It also supports the conclusion that Denmark's Herbert Pundik — who, incidentally, is based in Tel Aviv — shared Kimche's priorities.

Indeed, the choice of both Kimche and Pundik, the one as a representative of the Israeli "peace camp" and the other as a sort of European facilitator, is quite surprising. An ex-Mossad man — how "ex" is anybody's guess — seems a poor choice for a "civic" Israeli ally, even within the terms of reference of the Egyptian participants. A "slimy character" was how a veteran European journalist described Kimche in a private conversation this week, who, it is said, was not the think-tank-academic sort of intelligence worker, but a true blue, clandestine-dirty-tricks-division sort. European intellectuals and representatives of civil society, members of the European parliament, writers, academics, renowned journalists, leaders of mass organisations of all sorts, are by no means few and far between. But as far as I can judge, Pundik's sole claim to renown, in the Middle East or anywhere else, lies in his association with the Copenhagen affair.

The only possible reason for the Egyptian participants' choice of European and Israeli partners is that the latter chose them — in all accounts, Pundik and Kimche appear to be literally hounding the Egyptians — and, of course, the sponsorship of the Danish Foreign Ministry. Both reasons, it seems to me, are to say the least highly inadequate, especially in view of the grand objectives of the Egyptian side.

Then there is the self-conscious mimicry of Oslo: north European retreats; north European sponsorship; Denmark in place of Norway; secret talks; Pundik (the father) in place of Pundak (the son); and finally a high-sounding, though (unlike Oslo) by no means resounding, declaration. What was sordid in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations — we might recall that Haidar Abdel-Shafi, Hanan Ashrawi and other "public" Palestinian delegates were made to look like fools, jumping hither and thither between Tunis (for instructions), Washington and Jerusalem, while the real negotiations were taking place behind their, and the Palestinian people's, backs in Oslo — is doubly so when the issue at stake is supposed to be dialogue between intellectuals, cooperation between "civil societies", a peoples' alliance, etc. Again, I can see no explanation for this, within the terms of reference of the Egyptian protagonists, other than possibly to pander to a rather ridiculous Danish whim — the Danes, of course, anxious not to be outdone by their Norwegian neighbours.

In any case, the whole thing has fallen flat on its face. One of the most interesting aspects of the Copenhagen fallout has been the stark contrast between the interest it generated in Egypt, and the virtually total neglect it was met with everywhere else, and most especially in Israel. For the Israeli media, the Copenhagen Declaration was a non-event. As far as I can tell, and I have been searching extensively, only three articles have appeared in the Israeli press dealing in one way or another with Copenhagen since the Declaration was issued at the end of January — none of them front page. This, to my mind, is fascinating since it clearly mocks the Egyptian side's hopes of affecting in any way Israeli public opinion. Israeli public opinion simply does not know about Copenhagen, and those who do are not really interested.

The other side of the picture is that, rather than building bridges of dialogue and cooperation between Egyptian and Israeli intellectuals and "civil societies", Copenhagen has, if anything, helped bolster and solidify the Egyptian intelligentsia's, and the bulk of Egyptian civil society's, rejection of dialogue and cooperation on such terms as Copenhagen's — a much greater circle of people than the "Nasserists and Islamists" that Kimche seems to deplore so strongly. The single notable exception to this, of course, is Egypt's business community, which did not need Copenhagen to do business with the Israelis. They've been doing it for years.

So if there is any legitimacy to the objective of "assuaging Israeli security concerns and fears", the outcome of the exercise has been the opposite. Indeed, if we are to expect future coverage of Copenhagen, either in the Israeli or the Western press, it will be of the "wall of hostility" prevalent within the Egyptian intelligentsia and civil society. If Kimche did make "a dent", it was very small indeed.

Can the fact that Copenhagen's Egyptian protagonists have reaped the exact opposite of what they set out to sow be attributed to mere miscalculation? I believe that miscalculation is part of the picture, but that the whole picture can be explained only by looking at the terms of reference in accordance with which they embarked on the road to the Danish capital. These, in my view, are essentially flawed, a conclusion which I hope to discuss in future articles.



The Cairo International Film Festival for Children is one of only a handful of cultural events that seriously attempts to address itself to a young audience. **Mursi Saad El-Din** examines the offerings of this week's seventh festival



Disney Studio's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, screened at the opening of the festival

Young at heart

Once again it was a children's event and I very much doubt whether the majestic and often rather serious Conference Centre had ever seen such a large gathering of children. Children of all ages, some accompanied by parents, others seemingly not, had flocked into the Centre. They came to their own festival of films, an event where, for once, they might feel they were themselves really in charge.

The opening was quite sober and, for the first time in the history of the festival, the accompanying show was short and, what is more, almost highbrowish. It was accompanied by the music of Gamal Abdel-Rehim, settings of traditional children's songs.

The events of the evening were introduced by two children of ten, and they did a marvelous job, welcoming the guests and greeting the audience and thanking those organisations that had contributed to the festival.

Then followed what could be regarded as a bombshell, the latest Walt Disney film, which has just been released in the US. Some may think *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* as not really a fitting tale for children, though the screening at the opening proved such kill-joys triumphantly wrong.

It was a wonderful start to what promised to be a wonderful festival. But in spite of the great efforts of the festival organisers, it still seems that the Egyptian film world has yet to be convinced about the importance of the event. This was reflected in the absence of leading film personalities both from the opening and the screening of films. It is a pity that this is so since without creating interest in the very idea of children's cinema among industry professionals, the few children's films actually produced locally will never be anything more than festival entrant oddities.

This year, though, some countries will be participating in the event for the first time, and some of the films they brought are quite revealing. In the past the production of children's films had really been monopolised by only a few countries, many part of the Eastern bloc. Films made in the Soviet Union, East Germany, Hungary and other socialist countries were of very high technical standard, though often the propaganda content of the films was a little crude. The UK, France and the US are also active in the field, as is Canada, which in recent years has produced a number of excellent films, many of which have been screened at earlier festivals.



Zebras: Patterns in the Grass, one of 133 films sponsored by *National Geographic*

Most of the films to be screened during the festival address the 10-18 age range. There are, however, some films for the very young. One of them, a Finnish film — Finland, incidentally, is participating for the first time — has Erpo and Turpo, two teddy bears living on the bookshelf in the children's room, as its protagonists. Both bears are avaricious readers, and after finishing *Treasure Island* decide to go treasure hunting themselves. When a shipload of hostile creatures gives chase the bears are forced to change course and sail to the calmer waters of the kitchen.

India, as usual, has some wonderful entries in the festival, mostly — again as has become the norm — long features. *Halo*, the story of seven year old Sasha and her search for her lost puppy through the terrifying streets of Bombay is, at 90 minutes, one of the longest films on offer. The journey is described in a complex narrative scheme, and is told by an old, ultra-traditional mother, a newspaper reporter, and through the device of having Sasha followed by a video camera-wielding whiz-kid.

A welcome addition to this year's event is the participation of *National Geographic*, who are responsible for organising the screening of 133 natural history documentaries within the framework of a special panorama.

This year, as in previous years, films have been organised to allow time for a discussion following each screening, so the intended audience of the film, i.e. children, will be able to give directors some feedback as to their own responses. And the schedule also includes two general seminars, which I have great pleasure in chairing. One, organised by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, will focus on the development of media cadres within children's programming, while the second, organised by the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, will focus on the use of Arab symbols in animated films.

Two juries, for the international competition and the prize of the Arab Council, will announce their verdicts on Sunday, when the Minister of Culture and the president of the Festival will hand over the prizes. And then the curtain will fall, once more, on a landmark event for our children.

Music

Music in the storm

David Blake escapes the raging of the wind

Violin and Piano Recital; Alexander Ostrowski, violin; Johanna Horny-Neumann, piano; Gomhouriya Theatre, 20 Feb

"I've never played in a more beautiful hall than this and it is the first time in my life I have played before 12 people. Interesting." So said Alexander Ostrowski from the stage of the Gomhouriya Theatre.

Outside it was Siberia. Inside, we orphans of the storm had, as well as the speaking and playing, some wonderful dreaming and dancing because, though we were only 12, we had these two chargers of the Light Brigade to give an electric, sparky show. What mattered was who was on the platform and not the number of the audience. And the right people were on stage. With swagger and complete indifference to events around them, they played like demons.

There are no empty concert halls, only empty players. These two were volcanoes of tempest and speed, spurred on by the surrounding icy void. The first piece, Mozart — Sonata for violin and piano, K454 — was a dream of a lost summer sunset. The players began a bit scathingly but the music and their high art soon turned to smiles, and so did the 12 in the skating rink of the Gomhouriya.

The first movement of the sonata is freshly minted. It is a sad song, but warm — a Mozart elegy of misguided pleasures and doubts. More Hamlet than a duo, the players melted into one, holding back the awful chatter of the passing throng, and the inanities and pains of life. They passed on to the heights and became a unison of angelic watchers. Far below was the mist of life, up here the brightness.

Then a change, as the piano, so immaculately played throughout the entire concert, gave notes which, joined by the violin, bade farewell to earthly things and drifted away. There we were, surviving witnesses to the concentrated beauty of their playing.

Came the Grieg — Sonata no 3 in C minor, op 45 — passionate, romantic and animated. Piano and violin sonatas can be dull, an echo game for two, a bit like watching chess when you don't know the moves. Over to her. Then him. Are we ever surprised? Some players make of this hit and run game a love story. And it was a love story we had, as the two voices continued to call each other from distant hill tops.

The violin sang most of the song in the second half of the sonata, with Ostrowski offering endless changes of mood and tone. His impression? Clear. The story? Ironic but warm. There was constant good humour and an absence of stodge. The violinist, a city man on a fjord hill-top, was distant but loving.

This is the Grieg everyone knows. Swans on the float, views of the human condition seen from on high. No grey fade outs for Grieg. We go off into a sturdy sunset.

From here on this concert really did go to town — to Vienna. We travelled with Fritz Kreisler, a violinists adored by generations ice ages ago it seems, before the nuclear dust storms tarnished the patina of life. His *Caprice Vennois* is like an elegant Japanese lacquered table in a drawing room strewn with velvet cushions. The mood in the beautiful hall changed, and we entered the tea room of the Sacher Hotel before opera time takes us across the street. Make no fuss about this music; it is as real as steel. Kreisler knew what he was doing. He was after tears, and he got them. Gone the Gomhouriya. Even the 12 disappeared to the land of ospreys, early Cartier, Sachertorte and the style opulent with a dusting of heartbreak.

Music glories in this atmosphere, and so did the two players on this night of storms. All we could do was offer a tear, and many thanks, for their night on Bald Mountain.

Brahms VI; Sasha Rojdestvenski, violin; Cairo Symphony Orchestra; Ahmed El-Saedi, conductor.

Richard Strauss said that there was nothing special about conductors, and then proceeded to give an exhibition of immobility that would shatter any explanation. Kurtwangler would open the realms of heaven and hell and then stumble off in silence. Toscanini could scream, but only in the pursuit of excellence. They come and go, the conductors, waving their sticks, and no one has a clue about how or from where their powers come.

Everyone knows the plodders — the clods who leave the music like a lump lying on the ground. But some conductors fly. How do they do it?

No answers to the mystery in this concert, which showed once again that El-Saedi can fly. The programme was nothing special. Except for the first of the three pieces, A Khairat's *Isis symphonic overture*, the programme comprised two battle scarred bodies from the symphonic circuit.

One loves Brahms and Beethoven. One loves bread and water. But always, with music, it is the same notes to be spun out from Tokyo to Sydney and back again. Then along comes a maestro and a new series of body action commences. Everything changes. Metamorphosis occurs, and the piece is new. The players are alerted to new directions, as paths which were once invisible are signposted. The inexplicable is made manifest, and new territory opens out.

The Brahms, concerto in D major for Violin and orchestra, op 77, and the Beethoven fifth are well-trodden paths. The Beethoven is parental music. What is the first memory of father? Skinny or plump? One can even remember the smell of parents, likewise early performances of Beethoven symphonies, the flotsam from the memory pond of music.

We began with Brahms, introducing Sasha Rojdestvenski, young, blithe and well-known. This work, in three movements of classic design, is long and exhausting for player and orchestra.

Movement one, and the orchestra caught the seething quality, though the violinist did not. Throughout the long haul of the concerto the soloist lacked thrust and impetuousity. Maybe the performance given in Alexandria of the same piece the night before had depleted his energy. The effort was made, but the dominant mood of the music did not come.

There are no ways around Brahms and his instrumental concerti. We are in important, imposing territory. The artists must fit the image, for Brahms is Brahms. The first movement wore on, with everything presented sans violin. The soloist played, but this is not the same as responding.

The orchestra was sometimes huge in response to Saedi's needs, and powerfully speedy. The violinist hung on. It sufficed, but no more. Even at the end the violinist was doing his best. The gypsy, though, was worn out. Everest expects every man to do his duty but sadly, in spite of programme build up, the violinist's best was journeyman made good, which is hardly enough.

Before Beethoven's fifth there is a question that should be asked. From where does El-Saedi draw his strengths? His exactitude, without pedantry or academic head-wagging, fulfills his need. We get clarity to amaze, speed to revivify, and another element without name, but which might be characterised as a capacity to refresh. He is not reverential and he does not stop to show off.

The Beethoven was a triumph. It shone, speedy and exciting, and the journey was life giving. So what was the fifth symphony of Beethoven? It has been heard many times before, but never quite like this.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Latin American Paintings
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 28 Feb.

Reda Abdel-Salam (Paintings)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10am-2pm & 6pm-10pm. Until 28 Feb.

Farid Fadel (Paintings & Drawing)
Qasr El-Aini Festival Hall, Qasr El-Aini Faculty of Medicine, Manial. 25-28 Feb.

Egyptian Houses
Khan El-Maghraby Gallery, 18 El-Mansour Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 3349. Daily 10.30am-3pm & 4pm-8.30pm. Until end of Feb.

Video Visions Cairo 2
El-Hanager, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 9am-9pm. Until 1 March.
Installations and video works by Marie José Burki, Christoph Draeger, Simon Lamunière, Ahmed Hassouna, Fares Abdel-Kareem, Hassan Khan and Mohamed Abla, among others.

Huda Lutfi (Paintings)
Ewart Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. 3-7 March.

Sherif Abdel-Badie (Paintings)
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 6 March.

Ola El-Seify (Paintings)
CSA, 4 Road 21, Maadi. Daily 10am-2pm & 5pm-9pm, Thur 9am-7pm. 3-6 March.

Mohamed Abdel-Moneim (Drawings & Watercolours)
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 11am-8pm. Until 6 March.

Hoda El-Ghaisty
French Cultural Centre, Heliopolis Annex, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. 23 Feb-6 March.
Oil paintings under the title Orient and Occident.

Margo Veillon (Self portraits)
Cairo Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab El-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 8 March.
To mark the artist's ninetieth birthday, a collection of self portraits from throughout her long career.

Egyptian Houses

Peggy Crawford (Photographs)
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5422. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 27 March.
The artist's 34 coloured photographs, including houses, villages, temples, doors, façades, huts and mosques, built of mud, reeds, coral and stone portray the Yemeni traditional architecture built of the earth.

Spring
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. 3-30 March.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil
1 Kafour El-Akhshid St, Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm.
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil and his wife, includes works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Rodin and a host of impressionist works, housed in the villa once belonging to the Khalils and converted into a museum with little, if any, expense spared. There are also a number of excellent orientalist works.

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.
The world's largest collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures, including massive granite statues and the smallest household objects used by the ancient Egyptians, along with, of course, the controversial mummies room. A perennial must.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.
Founded in 1910, the museum houses a distinguished collection of Coptic art and artefacts, including textiles, manuscripts, icons and architectural features in a purpose built structure in the heart of the Coptic city.

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose Egypt Awakening became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post revolutionary Egypt.

FILMS

Debut Films of The Higher Institute for Cinema Graduates
Goethe Institute, 5 El-Bustan St, Bab El-Louq. Tel 575 9877. 4 March, 6.30pm.

New German Film Series
Goethe Institute, as above. 5 March, 6.30pm.
Mutter Kusters Fahrt Zum Himmel (1975) directed by R W Fassbinder.

Il Deserto Dei Tartari (1976)
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 1 March, 7pm.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

Bekhit Wa Adila II (Bekhit And Adila II)
Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 5726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Horreya I, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Daily 1pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daly 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Imra'a Fawq El-Qemma (A Woman At The Top)
Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm. New Odeon II, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

Hallaq Housh
Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Hassan El-Lali
Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm. Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. New Odeon III, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

The Cup
Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight.

Jingle All the Way
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

The Nutty Professor
El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

Maximum Risk
Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. El-Horreya II, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm. New Odeon I, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

Midnight Man
Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 5726. Thur & Sat, midnight.

MUSIC

Flute and Piano Recital
French Cultural Centre, Mounira Annex, 1 Madraset El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679. 27 Feb, 8pm.

Arabic Music Ensemble
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 342 0589. 27 Feb, 8pm.
Conducted by Salah Ghobashi.

Amadeus Chamber Orchestra & Josep Henriquez
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 28 Feb, 8pm.

Cairo Opera Orchestra
Gomhouriya Theatre, Gomhouriya St. Tel 391 9956. 28 Feb, 9pm. Conducted by Ivan Filev.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 1 March, 8pm.

Trio Dubois
Ewart Hall, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. 2 March, 8.30pm.

Piano Recital
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 2 March, 8pm.

Nuova Opera di Barattini
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 3 & 4 March, 11am.

Oriental Jazz
Greek Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5436. 3 March, 11pm.

Cairo Opera Dance Theatre
Gomhouriya Theatre, Gomhouriya St. Tel 391 9956. 1-11 March, 9pm.

THEATRE

The Last Scene Of a Tragedy
French Cultural Centre, Heliopolis Annex, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824, 27 Feb, 8pm.
This adaptation of Samuel Beckett's play is directed by Ossama Farouq and performed by the Eshraka Company.

Bahlool Fi Istanbul (Bahlool In Istanbul)
Ramsis Hilton Theatre, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 10pm, Fri & Sun 8.30pm.

Hekmat Hanem...Almaz?
George Abiad Hall, Ezbekiya Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 1267. Daily 10pm.

Dastoor Ya Siadna (With Your Permission, Masters)
El-Fann Theatre, Nadi El-Musiqa St, Ramsis. Tel 578 2444. Daily 8.30pm.

Ballo (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Madinet Nasr. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm, Thur 10pm.
Starring Salah El-Saadani, directed by Samir El-Asfouri.

El-Ganzir (The Chain)
El-Salam Theatre, Qasr El-Aini. Tel 355 2484. Daily exc Mon, 9pm.

Ka'b 'Ali (High Heels)
Radio Theatre, 4 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 578 4910. Daily 8pm, Wed & Thur 10pm.

El-Zaim (The Leader)
El-Haram Theatre, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily 8.30pm, Wed & Thur, 10pm.

LECTURES

Ibn Taimiya On The "Ahl Al-Bayt", The Opinion of A Sunnite Scholar On A Shi'ite Cult
Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies, 1 Dr Mahmoud Azmi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 0076. 27 Feb, 5.30pm.
Lecture by Gino Schallenbergh from the NIAASC.

Sovereign Rating in Egypt
CEDEJ, 14 Gam'eyat El-Nisr St, Mohandessin. Tel 361 1932. 4 March, 5pm.
Lecture by Mahmoud Mohieddin, Cairo University.

A Century of Architecture in Egypt 1850-1950
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 2-4 March.
2 March
Session 1, 11.30am-1.30pm: Dream and Reality: Austrian Architects in Egypt 1869-1914 by Rudolf Agstner, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vienna. Two German Architects in Egypt: Carl von Diebitsch and Julius Franz by Elke Pflugradt Abdel-Aziz, University of Bonn. L'Oeuvre Egyptienne d'Ambroise Baudry 1838-1906 by Mercédès Volait, CNRS.
Session 2, 3pm-6pm: Alessandro Limongelli, a Roman Architect in Cairo by Giorgio Muratore, University of Rome. La Figure et L'Oeuvre de L'Architecte Ferestano di Fausto 1890-1965 by Guiseppe Miano, University of Rome. Mario Rossi by Ahmed Sidky, AUC. Victor del Burgo by Doris Behrens Abu Seif, Munich.
3 March
Session 3, 9.30am-1.30pm: Architect Max Herz and His Activities in Egypt by Istvan Ormos, University of Budapest. Architecture et Architectes Grecs en Egypte XIX-XX Siècles by Vassilis Colonnas, University of Thessalonia. The Egyptian European Architecture in the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Centuries by Mohamed Abul-Amayem, IFAO. Alcuni Progetti di Giulio Magni per Alessandria by Ezio Godoli, University of Florence. Realisations Italiennes et Grecques à Alexandrie: Une Approche Comparative by Mohamed Awad, University of Alexandria. Italian Architects Builders of Churches in Egypt and in the Capitals of the Mediterranean by Simonette Ciranna, University of Rome.
Session 4, 3pm-6pm: Reordering Traditions: A Design Mentality by Khaled Asfour, King Faisal University. Elogio dell'Architettura Quotidiana by Attilio Petruccioli, MIT. Les Grecs de l'Egypte et Leurs Appert à la Formation de la Ville Moderne d'Alexandrie by Alexandra Yerolimpos, University of Thessalonia. L'Architecture des Bâtiments Commandités Par les Compagnies d'Assurance Italiennes en Egypte by Diana Barillari, University of Florence.
4 March
Session 5, 9.30am-1.30pm: Architetti Italiani e Progetti di Trasformazione Urbana by Cristina Pallini, Milan Polytechnics. Ernest Jaspar à Heliopolis by Ann van Loo. Alexandre Marcel à Heliopolis: Création Architecturale ou Scenographie Urbaine by Pascal Garret. L'Architecture de Maadi by Samir Rafaat. Garden City: Mise en Place et Evolution by Marianne Guillet, CEDEJ.
Session 6, 3pm-6pm: Charles Goad and the Fire Insurance Maps of Cairo and Alexandria 1895-1910 by Nicholas Warner. La Conoscenza Primo Passo Per la Conservazione delli Monumenti by Laura Baratin, University of Bologna. Projet de Constitution d'une Banque de Données sur l'Architecture Etrangère en Egypte by F Pochini, S Gasperis and D Lorusso. Preservation of Cairo Architectural Colonial Heritage by Hoda Abdel-Hamid, ARCE.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.

Please telephone or send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064.
Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

Around the galleries



Reda Abdel-Salam

"MEANING in the middle of the street" is the title **Mohsen Shaalan** has chosen for his exhibition at **Cairo Atelier**. And the thrust of the exhibition appears to be an examination of the way in which the line between public and private space on Cairo's streets is continuously subverted. The Atelier also shows watercolours by **Bekhit Farrag** — lyrical landscapes punctuated by rural architecture.

Extra Gallery is devoted to recent works, both paintings and sculpture, by **Reda Abdel-Salam**. The paintings, vibrant and garish, display the artist's gifts as a colourist while the sculptures are constructed from found objects, discarded electricity cables and the like.

Reviewed by ***Nagwa El-Ashri***

هكذا من الأصل

Languages sacred and profane, but can they ever really mix? David Blanks and Gerda Mansour explore the implications of an ongoing debate

The grammar of misunderstanding

Scholars from 22 countries met to discuss "English and Islam: Creative Encounters", at a conference organised by the International Islamic University of Malaysia. **David Blanks** attended

Because Arabic is a sacred language — and English profane — many writers contend that the two are fundamentally incompatible. English had not yet appeared when the Qur'an was revealed; it lacks mystical depth; and it seems wholly inadequate for expressing spiritual truths. The perception of the word "God," for instance, is different from that of "Allah." Other concepts such as *zakat* are culturally untranslatable. For that matter, English-speakers are even deprived of saying the sacred sounds, which cannot be reproduced in their language. The most telling example of all is the word "religion" itself, which fails to convey the full meaning of *din*, its Arabic equivalent. This is absolutely basic. No wonder Western readers find it difficult to understand that Islam is more than a religion: it is a comprehensive way of life.

These problems of translation have further implications. For one, if English lacks equivalents for important Arabic words, then any attempt to represent Islamic concepts will fall short of the mark. Worse still, some English definitions of Arabic words might actually distort the meaning of Islam and/or create prejudices in the minds of foreigners because Western dictionaries are in many ways Christian-centric. Even the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "Allah" as the name of the Deity among "Mohammedans", an error which may well be the most politically incorrect in the history of modern lexicography. This is why scholars throughout the Muslim world are comparing alternate translations of the Qur'an in the search for a more Islamically appropriate vocabulary in English.

People are equally aware, however, that English is indispensable in the modern world and that ignoring it would be counter-productive. Today, in fact, there are many Muslim languages, including Turkish, Persian, Urdu, Indonesian, and Malay, so in some cases Muslims need English to communicate with one another. Indeed, the majority of the world's Muslims do not speak Arabic. The increasingly likely scenario is that they will soon be contacting one another in English via the Internet, which could be an extremely important tool for breaking down Western stereotypes. *The Council on American-Islamic* Relations, for example, has a mailing list (CAIR-NET) which advises the media on Islam, answering questions and promoting a more balanced view of Islam for American journalists and broadcasters. There are hosts of Muslim web sites which function in much the same way.

And if anyone needs convincing, the ubiquity of the Internet is a forceful reminder that English is the language of science, technology, and global business — simply put, Muslims cannot afford to do without it. Politicians and businessmen understand that English has a vital role to play at the international level. Just as in Egypt, language schools are being set up throughout the Muslim world, and scholarships are being established to send the best students to American universities. This serves a variety of purposes. Most of the efforts are aimed at technical training: students are expected to return to their communities as engineers, doctors, and teachers. At the same time, it is hoped that intellectuals will be able to grasp the increasingly notable scholarly and critical works that are being produced in English, and that they will use their fluency to inform English speakers of Muslim ideas and to promote mutual understanding and improved cross-cultural relations. From this perspective, understanding English is the duty of Muslim intellectuals to the world at large. For that matter some see English as essential for Islamicisation.

Yet there are risks. Languages are not value-free and educators are concerned about the ways in which English is being taught. One of the conference participants, Dahiru Mohammad Argungu, a linguist from Uganda, cautioned that a single sentence in a grammar textbook could have a profound effect on a Muslim child, "disturbing his emotions, irritating his faith, and shaking the inner foundations of his socio-cultural existence." This is where most of the tensions between English and Islam are located. Western and Islamic educational philosophies can be worlds apart. Some educators believe in radical cultural diversity, arguing that any and all texts should be taught. Others worry that poets lead people astray. The most conservative critics argue that excessive ambiguity is a sign of vain, excessive individuality. Literature is good, they say, to the extent that it is beautiful and true, but not otherwise; beauty is not an end in itself; and a world governed by chance — such as appears in modern drama — is unrealistic; therefore, it cannot be endorsed by an Islamic literary theory.

But because the relationship between English and Islam varies from country to country and person to person, there is enormous disagreement over this point, and this is nowhere more evident than in the poems, short stories, and novels of Muslims writing in English. According to Amin Malak, the first Muslim novel ever written in English was Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940), a story about a middle class family in British India in the early twentieth century. In it the author presents an enlightened view of Islam as a source of inspiration. Although the publisher was hesitant at first, the book appeared thanks to the effective encouragement of Virginia Woolf and E M Forster.

It is ample testimony of the need to more fully understand the creative encounters between English and Islam that since 1940 Muslims from across the globe have produced an enormous body of work in English that has reached the highest levels of critical acclaim. As publishers from Jakarta to Rabat busily search for the next Nobel Prize winner, there has emerged a growth industry in Ph.D. dissertations on Third World literature. Simultaneously, more than a little controversy has surfaced. To take but one case from close to home, Ahdaf Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992) has been praised for its depth and ideological vision and criticised for its depiction of Muslim women. This is symptomatic of the ongoing debate over literary criticism. Many scholars think that works of art should be judged from an amoral point of view and that agreement or disagreement with a moral position in a text is not a condition or quality of criticism. Likewise, whereas some wonder why Soueif should write in English to begin with, others feel that her ability to do so should be a cause for celebration.

Muslim narrative in English saw its most dramatic and confusing moment with the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1989). Even the most liberal critics were offended, including Malak, an Iraqi scholar currently working in Canada. Although he is known for his progressive views, Malak was shocked and angered by the novel, calling it "reckless" and "immature". He accuses Rushdie of "pandering to non-Muslims." Malak maintains that despite the new critics' theories on authorial intention (Barthes, Foucault), Rushdie knew what sort of impact the book would have. Still, Malak is critical of the *fatwa* issued against the writer, which he sees as an intrusive move on the part of a politicised clergy. Islam, he notes, has respect for books; unfortunately, the *fatwa* serves to further Western stereotypes of Islam as a book-burning, writer-killing culture.

Some might say that English and Islam are inherently inhospitable to one another. They question the wisdom of mingling the two, believing that there is an ineffable gap between the sacred and the profane, an unbridgeable chasm that will swallow those who attempt to cross it. Better to turn away from the edge and seek one's own path according to one's own traditions. But ultimately this modern world, with its technological marvels and its human frailties, with its global communications and its cosmic indifference, its Cape Canaverals and its Cape Towns, its cities, its villages, its dreams and its disasters, ultimately, this world needs both English and Islam. English is the language of modern science and civilisation; Islam, a world religion addressed to every human being. The two must strive together for mutual comprehension and a peaceful tomorrow.

The writer lectures in history at the American University in Cairo.



The Tower of Babel, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1563, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Questions of purity

Language, globalisation and identity: **Gerda Mansour** examines the intricate relationship combining the three

The increasing use of English words and phrases among the rising middle classes, but also by the illiterate or semi-literate, when interacting with fellow-Egyptians or other Arabic-speakers in predominantly Egyptian social settings is becoming a hot issue in Egypt. Academic societies, intellectuals of various stripes and political parties discuss this phenomenon in their meetings and journals. Even TV caricatures this behaviour in a current soap-opera. Many perceive this as yet another threat to national identity, alongside the spread of alien consumption habits and values. The subject is loaded with so much confusion and emotionalism, especially when the spectre of globalisation is evoked, that it deserves some serious discussion.

Language is a tool of communication, a bridge between individuals as well as between societies. But in another sense it is also a barrier, because it is also the most important symbol of group identity. In fact, the two functions of language always go hand in hand. There may be other cultural aspects which distinguish one nation from another or one province from another, but usually what defines a nation or its sub-groups is language or dialect. Language is often more effective in providing cohesion than physical or political barriers, and social barriers invariably find their expression in linguistic variation.

Our first loyalty is usually to our mother tongue — it is the language of intimacy; it evokes feelings of belonging to the group of origin and a sense of security. But just as children grow up and eventually leave the parents' home, adult individuals may form wider relationships which go beyond the group of origin and may involve the need to master another dialect, the standard language, or even other languages.

However great the value may be which speakers attach to their second language, there is a different dimension to their attitude towards that language. While first languages (mother tongues) define the speaker's identity, second languages acquire more of the qualities of an instrument. In other words, bilingual individuals tend to use one language for its identity values — as a barrier to the outside world — and another for its instrumental and bridging values. This raises important questions: Do second languages acquired at school, for the various purposes of wider communication, necessarily introduce an element of confusion or even identity conflicts? And if they do, where and under what circumstances does the need for international communication, mutual understanding and tolerance clash with the need to preserve cultural identity?

In the countries of the European Union it has long been recognised that learning one or two of the most important 'global' languages has become indispensable. Even though the competition for leadership remains unresolved there is little doubt, especially among the smaller members of the EU, that for their needs of international communication English is the most important lingua franca. And yet mother tongues such as Dutch and Danish continue to hold their place as the main symbol of group identity.

In other parts of the world the situation appears to be different. In Africa, the Middle East and Asia English and French were colonial languages, imposed on the colonised people as official languages to the detriment of the local languages. In many cases these imported official languages served as a means of governing multilingual colonies because there were no standardised written local languages. However, there were other cases where the colonial language not only prevented language development of the indigenous languages but actually served to suppress written languages with a long tradition. The countries of the Third World therefore have some justification for their fear that the influence of a world language may lead first to the corruption and eventually to the disappearance of their local languages.

Apart from the spontaneous identity value that languages have for individuals, they are part of the consciously developed and continually reinforced bond of a nation. When we speak of 'nationality' we think of a complex of values in which a common language plays a major role. Linguistic nationalism is therefore cultivated and carefully nourished in most independence movements and, in the 19th century, language frequently served to define national territory. It can easily be seen what a powerful political tool language can be in such a context since it can lend itself to support national unity or to emphasise separateness and claims to secession. Some almost forgotten languages, such as Irish, or Hebrew — which only survived in writing — were resuscitated by political expediency.

Since the subject of national languages touches on issues of national identity and national cultural survival it is an extremely sensitive issue. The emotional overtones of the discourse on national languages signals that we are dealing with something that is not easily amenable to rational arguments. Nationalists everywhere tend to be linguistic purists, in other words, they support measures to oppose the invasion of their languages by loan words in the name of maintaining its cultural authenticity. In France, for instance, a full-scale war has been declared against the invasion of anglicisms and is pursued with all the power invested in the French Academy. And yet, borrowing words is an old game and there is no modern living language which does not have a considerable stock of loan words.

Defenders of linguistic purity who warn against hybridisation in language would do well to study the history of the English language which is one of the most hybrid languages in the world. It is estimated that only about 50 percent of the present vocabulary of English comes from English stock, the other 50 percent were imported from French, Latin and Greek, as well as many other languages. We would be unable to write one sentence of educated English without taking resort to some loan word or other. Even in normal daily speech we use words which have been changed in the process of assimilation over centuries, but which are nevertheless of non-English origin. In addition, the language has undergone considerable structural change over the last 1,000 years and yet, neither the hybrid character of the English vocabulary, nor its structural simplification have prevented it from surviving and spreading in the wake of the British conquest. One might even claim that these linguistic aspects have facilitated the expansion of English.

Whenever it is felt that the symbolic value of a language is in any way threatened, that cultural authenticity may be at stake, the reaction is usually to hark back to the glorious past, to a period when the national culture and language was in full bloom. The effect this preoccupation with the past has on language use and language development may be quite negative in the long run, for the tendency is either to ignore natural language change or to actively reverse it by reinstating the pristine form of the classical language. Natural language change refers to the small erosions which occur first in the spoken language — the contractions and modifications of some sounds, the dropping of weakly stressed endings, the simplification of certain difficult grammatical forms.

Most of the European languages were standardised in the 16th century or later, and in many cases language reforms are officially pursued from time to time when it is felt that the gap between the written (standard) and the spoken language is getting too wide. In this manner the standard language as taught everywhere at school is not very remote from daily educated usage. Furthermore, dialects are not seen as something that threatens the standard languages but as sources of enrichment.

The dangerous trend of my argument will become clear to my Arabic readers who invest classical Arabic (*al-lugha al-arabiyya al-fusha*) with properties not only evoking its long literary and religious tradition but capable also of serving as a language uniting the whole Arab nation in our modern day and age. It is a heavy burden to place on any one language. Apart from stressing the ideological function of *al-fusha* for maintaining Arab cultural unity, there is unfortunately no department of Arabic linguistics which encourages comparative studies in dialectology. Dialectology is in fact a non-subject, it is taboo. So it is left to foreign language departments and foreign researchers to study dialects, and the latter — partly because they are non-native speakers and can rarely absorb the depth and extent of linguistic knowledge which is accessible to the native speaker and partly because their interest may not be purely academic — tend to stress the differences rather than the similarities of various Arabic dialects. While dialectology begins with the establishment of a catalogue of minute variations, its ultimate aim should be a full description of spoken Arabic in all parts of the Arab world with emphasis on its common structural base. When that has been done linguists will be able to point to those features of *al-fusha* which are truly archaic, which are no longer part of the repertoire of the living Arabic language and approach the question of how to bring the standard language nearer to the spoken language in all parts of the Arab world. It is a big task, but it is not impossible and the benefits to the status and identity value of the Arabic language would be enormous. And in the context of 'globalisation' questions concerning status and identity will become increasingly central.

One aspect of global thinking and planning is the concept that in every decision affecting public life we should recognise that we have a responsibility to the planet as a whole. Taken in this sense globalisation is an extension of social responsibility — the concern for the survival of one group at the expense of another is to be replaced by a concern for the whole of humanity. Most people will agree that with the challenges and threats facing us in the 21st century, global thinking is not only a good thing, but essential for the survival of the human race and the planet.

Globalisation requires planning, organisation and international cooperation which, in turn, is dependent on a efficient tool of communication, a lingua franca or language of international diplomacy. Scientists and researchers all over the world also need to have at their disposal a precise instrument of globally understood terminology in order to exchange ideas and experiences. These needs for global communication provide the strongest argument in favour of teaching an international lingua France — be it English or one of its rival languages. The argument in favour or against one of these languages used to be, strictly speaking, the choice between one cultural imperialism and another, and perhaps more decisively, between one exporter of consumer goods and another. There seems to be a tacit understanding that whoever markets his language effectively will have no difficulty in marketing his products, which explains why an apparently harmless cultural competition is carried out with so much virulence.

And this shows us the other face of globalisation, or rather another interpretation which confounds globalisation with imperialist expansion of one society, its political and economic power, its behaviour patterns and its ideology over other, weaker societies. These are apparently expected to discard their indigenous traditions, their languages and cultures, adopt a 'global' language, way of life and patterns of consumption like those developed in the West, particularly in America. The so-called 'global village' is in fact a pseudo-American settlement whose inhabitants wear blue jeans or mini-skirts, chew gum, eat hamburgers, hot dogs and fried chicken and drink Coca-Cola, who sing and dance to the latest American pop music and generally seek to imitate whatever filters down through the American-dominated media.

Should one be surprised that there are people who object to this invasion of their social and cultural environment, who feel that their society is in the process of being totally transformed and attempt to rescue the native culture and customs? Unfortunately, however, the rescue attempts often betray a spirit of intolerance, narrow-mindedness and bigotry and advocate the illusion of a return to the glorious past. For those who are committed to creating a healthy social environment in the present and future it is important to identify the real threat: not global thinking and cooperation, nor Western science and technology, but American capitalism with its propaganda for a whole range of products of daily consumption which nobody needs and which nevertheless have insinuated themselves into our lives.

But let us return to global communication — it is obvious that progress in Third World countries depends on having access to new scientific and technological information, hence it is imperative to know one or more of the 'global' languages. Should it not be possible to achieve this without producing confused young minds who think that they must imitate everything American or French at all cost? *Is this phenomenon not rather an expression of the failure in education, both at school and at home, a failure in implanting proper values and fostering the ability to think independently, as well as a basic fault line in the social system of the country and a failure of their intellectual spokesmen? And lastly, would an enlightened attitude to one's own national language not help to pave the way to further development and enrichment of this vital symbol of identity, so that the influence of other languages are felt to be less threatening?

The writer lectures in socio-linguistics at Cairo University.

Plain Talk

I am a great believer in radio. Television, with all its visual attractions, could not lure me away from my radio set. Dutifully I follow the broadcasts of the BBC World Service and was particularly pleased to come across a series, in seven instalments, on the history of the British theatre.

Each programme lasts for half an hour, a surprisingly short time when you consider how much information was packed into the programme. When I first read about the series, as I was perusing the schedules, I admit that I wondered just how three and a half hours of broadcasting time could do justice to such a rich and splendid institution. Indeed my doubts were shared by Charles Spencer who, in the Arts and Books supplement of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote: "How can any series hope to cover such an amazing range of plays, people and theatrical experience by allocating, on average, half an hour to each century of British dramatic tradition?"

The first two episodes dealt with medieval mystery and morality plays, and by the time the series ends it will have covered everything up to the present decade. In conjunction with the series, the World Service drama section is broadcasting performances of seven key texts: *The Wakefield Mistress, Richard II, The White Devil, The School for Scandal, The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Look Back in Anger*.

BBC English is also organising a number of programmes which will run concurrently with the series called "In Rehearsal". These will focus on the language and interpretation of plays.

In radio broadcasts of plays, the audience is compelled to concentrate almost entirely on dialogue, while at the same time it is free to imaginatively construct the settings within which such dialogues are conducted. My prejudice in favour of radio is long-standing. Indeed, my first serious writing was in fact for radio and I remember particularly fondly a translation I made of *Riders To The Sea* which was broadcast on Egyptian State Radio in the 1940s, the beginning of a long and cherished association with the new cultural broadcasts of the second programme.

Given these past associations you can imagine my delight when I heard that cultural programming on State Radio was to be expanded. Cultural programmes, when first initiated, were designed to present what was considered most significant within local culture, in addition to giving listeners access to the finest foreign texts. The development of radio features in Egypt was closely linked to the aims of the cultural programmers in disseminating what was deemed best in both local and international production. I contributed regularly to a series of features on English novelists, for instance, and was also closely involved with the coverage of a number of PEN congresses.

I firmly believe that producing for radio requires, in the end, a great deal more effort than making programmes for television. Radio producers are required, using only sound, to create a convincing visual image. When television was first introduced there was a predictable response. Great concern was expressed that the new medium, in addition to taking the place of both cinema and theatre, would also kill off radio. And perhaps, during the early days of television, when the medium had a novelty value, such bleak prophesies appeared for a time to be true. Thankfully, though, this has not been the case and in the long run both cinema, theatre and radio have survived the competition.

Indeed, it is possible that the popularity of television programmes acted as a stimulus to radio producers, encouraging them to concentrate on the kind of programming best suited to their own medium. Certainly, radio programmes have undergone a massive leap in quality, and nowhere has this been more apparent than in the field of radio drama.

There is, may be, a small irony in the fact that, in radio drama, the world conjured up in the mind of the listener is far more palpable than on television, where it is hard to escape the feeling of both text and action being constrained by the sets. Over the radio, of course, there are no such limitations, with the result that a successful radio programme makes the listener inhabit a world far more real than its television counterpart.

Mursi Saad El-Din



Why Cinderella wanted to become a pumpkin

On 12 February 1947, an unknown fashion designer, Christian Dior, shows his first collection. Overnight, he becomes a celebrity. Forty-odd years after his death, the myth is still alive. **Fayza Hassan** wonders why



Mrs El-Khoury — Mrs S Niarchos — Carmen Tessier

Victoire Doutreleau — Ingrid Bergman — Olivia de Havilland

In 1945, at the end of the war, Christian Dior had a comfortable position, working for couturier Lucien Lelong as a fashion designer. Neither Lelong nor Dior had any significant measure or fame; nor did they particularly aspire to renown.

The predictions of fortune tellers, a chance encounter with an old friend and a business lunch with the "king of cotton" Marcel Boussac, president of the Comptoire de l'Industrie Cottonière, changed Dior's life unexpectedly, endowing him overnight with his own *maison de couture*.

At 41, having accepted the challenge and left a cushy job behind, Dior realised that he had only one choice if he did not want to sink into total oblivion: he had to make it really big. To break into the fashion scene, nothing but the best would do, he decided. He had to be demanding of fate and push his good fortune to the limit. He started with the premises on which he established his *Maison*, at 30 Avenue Montaigne.

In the elegant small hotel particulier, now of world fame, the salons were expensively decorated in hues of pearl grey and white, for that exclusive slightly old-fashioned look. He hand-picked his collaborators, first and foremost the faithful Madame Raymonde, who, employed for long years with Lelong, had decided to follow him on his adventure.

"To win the 'lace war' which I was launching," he wrote in his autobiography, *Christian Dior et Moi*, "I needed first class management. Raymonde was to be my second self, or rather my exact complement. She would be the wisdom of my fantasy, the order of my imagination, the discipline of my freedom, the accountability of my improvidence and the needed bond in time of strife."

He then rallied to his ranks Madame Bricard, who had brought to Molyneux's last collection her invaluable talents. "She was one of those people, scarce today, whose only reason for living was elegance..." he wrote. "Her only principle was that which demands the most refined luxury. She shared her points of view with the Ritz... her love of nature was limited to adoring the flowers with which she adorned dresses and hats so divinely." Madame Brissac brought to Dior that most indefinable French attribute, *le chic*.

Finally came Madame Marguerite, formerly of Jean Patou, who, like Penelope, sewed and unpicked tirelessly every stitch until she had declared it perfect, each creation so well finished that it looked as if it had not actually been hand-stitched, but, rather, had materialised by magic. For many years the "premiere" at Jean Patou, Madame Marguerite was abducted by Dior, who created for her the post of technical manager.

With this core team, Dior went to work on his first collection. There was never to be one quite like it in the history of fashion. The six models who presented it on that famous 12 February 1947 were inexperienced provincial girls: Noelle, Paule, Yolande, Lucile, Tania and Marie-Therese.

France was coming out of the war, its women dressed in soldiers' garb. The country was poor, obsessed with ration-tickets. Dior reacted against the rigour and the misery. In the 90 designs which formed his first collection, women became flowers, with soft shoulders, narrow waists and full breasts. His large skirts and petticoats reached the ankles, a petal-like expanse of rich, old-fashioned "pre-war" material. After almost two years of hard work, Christian Dior was finally ready.

His 90 creations, shown in the salons of 30 Avenue Montaigne, hit Paris like a bomb. The New Look was born and the war-weary women of the world had finally found their guru. Egypt, with the rest of the world, celebrated the genius of fashion: the weekly magazine *Image* headlined a double-page spread on the grand couturier in August 1956: "The astounding Mr Dior launches his 29th line."

Christian Dior places one magnet, then two, then three, one on top of the other, on a sheet of metal. He holds his breath, then lets go. "Magnificent," he says: "It holds." Dior is happy. Once more, he has changed the shape of women. Fifteen days ago, he presented his collection and, since that day, women in the street have not been the same. They all resemble three stacked magnets: the larger, below, is the skirt, Dutch fashion; the middle one is the chest, rather rounded; and the smallest, on top, is the bell-shaped hat. Avenue Montaigne the models are parading, bellies pushed forward, shoulders tightened as if shrinking from a cold breeze, hat close to the head, waist loosened... they look like our grandmothers in 1913... Mr Dior's first model in this particular collection had been baptised: 'What will they say?'

Jane Russel in America was horrified when she saw the first drawings, according to *Image*. 'Who does this little man think we are?' she exclaimed in anger. 'One day the skirts are over the knee, the next they are down to the ankles, and what, pray, am I supposed to do with my legs?' Whereupon she grabbed the phone and ordered her skirts lengthened.

"Since that famous day, 12 February 1947, when Dior presented his first collection," *Image* comments, "women have been suffering. They have had to look like flower petals, like the number eight, then the letter Z, be seen in *trompe l'oeil*, made into a vertical line, a diagonal, an egg shape. They have looked like the Eiffel Tower, like a cupola, an H, an A, a Y, and an F. Today they have to look like magnets."

Dior's designs followed politics and the economy, the magazine noted. "Women's physiology comes very much as an after thought. In 1947, he created the flower-woman as a reaction to the war; in '48, he gave her wings because the world was lighter; in '49 he invented the *trompe l'oeil* line because we were becoming lackadaisical. In 1950, he straightened women up because the world was holding on nevertheless; in '51 the diagonal line indicated that it was now leaning slightly to the side; in '52 his line took a Z shape as the world caved in. In '53, the iron curtain went up, there was Korea and Indochina and it became fashionable to be simply 'a good girl'. In '57, women are being women again, because Dior the tyrant has ordered breasts to bloom, hips to grow larger and hair longer."

Image waxed lyrical when it came to the designer's artistic sensibilities: "Dior has love affairs with his dresses: 'If some have disappointed or cheated on me, others have loved me faithfully. Dresses have souls...' he is fond of saying. To these works of love, he is in the habit of giving strange names, often those of famous authors: André Roussin, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Claudel and Maurice Rostand. 'Dresses fly away, but writings remain,' he says. But not all writing is favourable to Dior. He often receives hate mail, especially from irate husbands: 'With your so-called genius, you have disfigured my wife,' writes a farmer from Idaho. 'What would you say if I send her to you now?' A nurse from Chicago wrote: 'This thing (the dress he dubbed Trafalgar) which popped out of your mind resembles a nightmare walking out of an operating theatre right after major surgery. Have you sworn to turn us into objects of ridicule?' Dior shrugs criticism off. 'I like women to look like beautiful buildings,' he commented cryptically."

Dior for ever. White shantung coat, inspired by Dior's sketches. Spring 1991

Fifty years after his first collection, forty years after his death, the myth endures. This year, to celebrate the golden jubilee, the Dior myth is being revamped, with Galliano at the helm. Will he be able to carry the legend into the twenty-first century? Only time will tell.



Getting the worm

My mother does not credit me with having been a good baby. In mothers' parlance, that basically means that I did not let her sleep at night. In French, children's lack of consideration for their parents' rest is poetically referred to as giving someone "white nights". Apparently I gave her a lot of these. Did I sleep during the day? My mother does not remember, but I must have, I am sure, if my love for late mornings in bed is anything to go by.

I neither liked nor hated school, but I believe my feelings for it would have soared to great heights if only classes had not been scheduled in the wee hours of the morning. Why, I always wondered, did knowledge have to be imparted at the crack of dawn? Was it fresher then, and therefore easier to digest? I, for one, was totally impermeable to any information offered before two in the afternoon, at the earliest. Lethargic during the day, I came alive as the sun dropped below the horizon. At that point, my other, brilliant self materialised as if by magic. I understood, responded and generally performed according to expectations, albeit not on schedule. There was a lark which sang every night under my window just as dawn was breaking. "It is time to go to bed," sang the lark — or at least that is what I had decided the song meant, the first time I had heard it. I would turn off the lights, and sink luxuriously into a deep sleep, only to be rudely awakened a couple of hours later by the strident trill of the alarm clock. With time I became obsessed with this clock, lending it evil powers. I imagined it ringing earlier than it was supposed to, on purpose, and making fun of me. I was sure it enjoyed the initial shock it caused me; I envisioned it snickering evilly in its metallic way as I lay half awake, my heart pounding, hoping I would discover that I was burning with a raging fever which would make it impossible for me to go to school. A rather healthy child, I don't remember this ever happening, and my mother did not take kindly to fake illnesses. Therefore I can't recollect instances where the painful process of rising did not follow the mechanical wake-up call.

Sundays were our only days off. My generation did not belong to the "weekend" culture. To celebrate the one morning in the week when I could sleep in, I took a perverse pleasure in setting the alarm clock as usual, whereupon I would choose a good book, hurrying to finish it just before dawn. It was important that I be asleep for the 6.00 am call. I would listen to the abhorrent trill, a sarcastic smile on my face. I studied every note of the ring. It sounded silly and powerless, I'd tell myself. I would sit up slowly, placing my bare feet on the cold tiles, pretending all the while that I had to get ready for school. Having absorbed enough of the misery of the bleak morning, I would suddenly extend a vengeful hand and viciously slam it on the offending object, shutting it up decisively. Instead of proceeding with my daily routine, however, I would then slide back under the covers, rearrange the pillows for utmost comfort and go blissfully back to sleep.

Although I had solemnly promised myself that the early morning torture would stop once school was over, I went on to university. In my day it was a chance no young woman could afford to reject. Invariably, my classes were scheduled at 8.00 am. I learned to interact with my professors while sleep-walking. I was never described as a brilliant student, but I managed to get by.

My first boss insisted that his staff had to be in "bright and early". Good jobs were rare. Beggars could not be choosers. Unable to be bright at this time of day, I had to be early at least.

I chose a husband who was not a rabid workaholic. He was addicted to the night life and I stupidly assumed that he was therefore not an early riser. Wrong. He was one of these lucky people who can get by on four hours sleep. Up at 6.00 am, he plied the golf courses before going to the office. He needed a thermos of fresh percolated coffee and a couple of sandwiches to take with him. I had to make those. How had he managed before? It did not matter. Now that he had a wife, it was her sacred duty to provide him with his elevenses. Later, the children were born. Good sleepers generally, they took their early breakfast seriously and, hardly weaned from their morning feeds, they had to be driven to school, complete with packed lunches, whereupon I would proceed on to a full day's work at the office. Faithful to my old habits, I did my housework at night. On weekends the children had to be driven to ballet, art lessons, the Brownies and hockey games. To pack all these activities into a short weekend that also usually included shopping and visits to the dentist, we had to plan for early starts. I remember long years of being chronically fatigued; of sleep-walking around hosts and guests; of placing my contact lenses in the refrigerator and my best silk dress in the washing machine, on "hot". Sometimes, I forgot what year it was. I did not enjoy life. I kept telling myself that I would have, if only I could sleep to my heart's content.

Now my children are grown and I have flexible working hours. My obligations are few and far between. I work at night, as I have always liked to, and finally, after all these years, I can sleep as late as I please in the morning. I would sleep in, really, I'm sure I would, if only I could turn a deaf ear to the pitiful meows of my twelve cats begging for their breakfast at the crack of dawn.

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Aromatic meatballs

Ingredients:

1/2 kg minced meat
One onion (finely chopped)
One tsp. crushed garlic
Two tbsp. bread crumbs
1/2 cup washed rice (whole)
Two eggs
One cup stock
one lump of charcoal
Salt+pepper+allspice
Butter

Method:

Blend all ingredients well together (except the butter and charcoal). Smear a flat pan with butter, then shape the blend into medium sized balls and place them in the pan. Boil the stock and pour over meatballs whilst hot, cover and cook on top of the stove over moderate heat. When the liquid is absorbed, stir them all gently, remove from heat, and burn the lump of charcoal. Put it off by placing it over a piece of butter in the middle of the pan, and draw the meatballs around it. Cover for a few minutes so that the aroma penetrates them. Serve hot with spaghetti and a green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

A latticework saloon

Nigel Ryan avoids specials for two

Shopping malls are far from being my favourite places and there are few more desultory than the Bustan Centre. The coral pink exterior, the integrated multi-storey car park and commercial centre, the long corridors with shops with names like Rocky — I find something more than a little sad about such places. And always they boast restaurants of sorts, because shopping malls sell more than the rows of jeans in their shop windows. They are purveyors of nothing less than a "lifestyle".

The Café de Paris, on the ground floor of the Bustan Centre, is a peculiar place. In reality it is a piece of corridor corralled into a restaurant by the use of bits of lattice work. You enter throug0h lattice work swinging doors, a camp variant on the wild west saloon, and sit on tinny patio chairs. There are capiz shell lights hanging, and spot lights in the ceiling, and the walls are covered with illuminated displays advertising virulent coloured ice creams with names like brownie à la mode and banana royale. Opposite my table was a poster, for a Ray Charles concert on Friday, 28 June 1996, beginning at 8.30 at the Palais des Congrès de Paris. In such environments, of course, nothing can ever really be out of place. Whitney Houston blares out over the sound system, and young couples sit at the tables looking into one another's eyes. The management, engaging, perhaps, in a little niche marketing, have included items on the menu geared specifically to such couples. Eating alone I was unfortunately unable to sample the possibly intimate pleasures of "ice cream Café de Paris special for two".

Surprisingly, for somewhere so completely inside, it is flyblown, or so at least was my table, tucked neatly by the side of the ice-cream cabinet. The tables themselves boast at least as eclectic a range of accessories as the restaurant itself. The laminated mats on my table had a border of pears with a rainstorm of mulberries blowing across the centre, like the motifs on souvenir Italian pottery, while the next table boasted men in hunting pinks chasing foxes across the English countryside. Yet when all is said and done there can be no denying the popularity of the place. Practically every table was occupied.

Though it is possible to construct a reasonably substantial meal from the menu, I restricted myself to a capuccino and a roast beef sandwich. Arrived the ketchup, presumably an essential part of the lifestyle, and then the sandwich. It was served alongside french fries that had been cooked more than once, which is never very encouraging. These I left. The sandwich, though, was — surprisingly perhaps — perfectly reasonable. The bread was fresh, it included a mixture of crisp salads, and the beef, though well roasted, was less dry than one might expect. The capuccino, too, was passable.

And all for under LE12. It is, one suspects, the price that accounts for the popularity. The service, though, was efficient and if you arrive in a good mood you will probably depart in a similar frame of mind. Do not, however, contemplate stepping in even if only remotely down in the dumps.

Café de Paris, Bustan Shopping Centre, Bustan Street, Downtown. Tel: 39 22 297

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

ACROSS

1. Pastry filled with jam or fruit (4)
4. Vivacity (4)
9. Particular hue (5)
14. Go at excessive speed (4)
15. Stem of tree (4)
16. Love to excess (5)
17. Prep. of location 92)
18. Wears out (6)
20. Periods of abstinence from movement (5)
21. Type of wood used in cabinet-making (3)
23. Vigorous kind of fox-trot (7)
25. Expression of disbelief (3)
26. Deed (3)
28. Constricted: lacking breadth (6)
30. Strip for fastening parcels (4)
32. Brawl (7)
36. The Green Isle (4)
37. System of detection copied from bats (5)
38. Man's sweetheart (4)
42. Member of people living near Baltic (4)
43. Ego (2)
44. Symbol for "cobalt" (2)
45. Worthless; having no special purpose (4)
46. Wild animals' resting place (4)
47. Rows in theatre (5)
49. Send forth (4)
50. Announcements of receptions to visitors (7)
52. Vigour, pl. (4)
53. Deep ravine (6)
56. Through (3)
57. Make a choice (3)
58. Inconsiderate to others (7)
63. Listening (3)
66. Boundaries (5)
68. Slang for mistake (6)
70. High educational degree, abb . (2)
71. Miss Dunne (5)
72. Prep. of direction (4)
73. Of the people (4)
75. Tended (5)
76. Pekoe and Darjeeling beverages (4)
77. Rid (4)

DOWN

1. Become ragged at edge (4)
2. Far on in the day (4)\
3. Symbol for "actinium" (2)
4. Born (3)
5. Black (4)
6. Vein of metal ore (4)
7. Mead, beer, et al. (4)
8. Cozy corner (4)
9. Of the wrist (6)
10. Poem set to music (3)
11. The vanquished (5)
12. Comb. form for "straight" and "correct" (5)
13. Baste again (5)
19. Fester (3)
22. American elk (6)
24. Involve; take all one's time (7)
27. Mid-most (7)
29. Appease; liberate (7)
30. Recount (4)
31. Locality (4)
32. Contorts; squirms (7)
33. Put on the air (5)
34. Public notice (2)
35. Mother-of-earl (5)
39. Venerate (6)
40. Svelte (4)
41. Positions (4)
48. Printing measure (2)
51. Bedeviled (6)
53. Jocose (5)
54. Works (5)
55. Absolute; declare (5)
56. An Arab political body, abb. (3)
59. Memorial service (4)
60. Fir-fruit (4)
61. Title (4)
62. Fathers, Arabic (4)
64. Skilled (4)
65. A gardening job (4)
67. Weather directions (3)
69. At a distance (3)
74. Either's partner (2)

Last week's solution

هكذا من الأصل

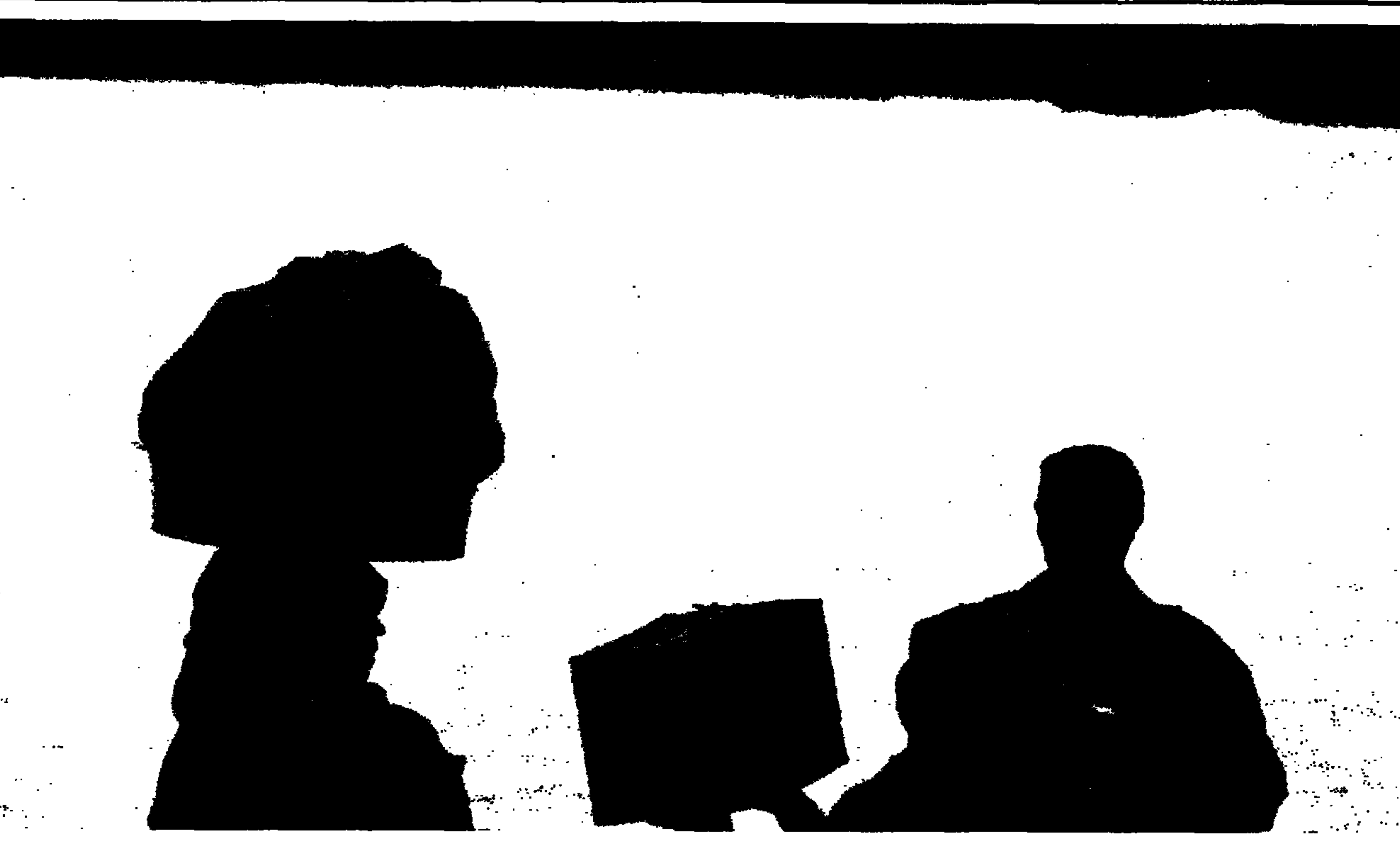


photo: Sherif Sonbol

Scores of low-income families face the prospect of eviction from Geziret El-Warraq because of a hike in rent prices. **Nevine Khalil** visited the island

'A roof over our head'

"I will kill anyone who comes near my family to throw us out," promised *Umm* Mohamed, a young mother of three who has lived on Geziret El-Warraq for the past eight years. Her husband works as an artisan in the industrial city of 6th of October and is barely able to afford their LE70 monthly rent which was recently raised to LE100. *Umm* Mohamed's landlord won an eviction order, but she appealed the ruling. "We decorated our flat so nicely," she pleaded, "and now they are destroying our dream."

Residents of Geziret El-Warraq, a Nile island situated between Imbaba and the industrial city of Shubra El-Kheima, have landed themselves in deep water. Scores of tenants are at loggerheads in court with their landlords because they have refused a hike in rents. They are now facing the prospect of eviction.

Most residents are artisans and farmers who work plots of land on the island, although it is also home to a handful of civil servants and academics. Living conditions are poor and sanitation is abominable because of the absence of a sewage system and scarce drinking water. Residents, therefore, are forced to bring their drinking water from the mainland and wash their crockery next to a rubbish dump which spills into the Nile. The island is, however, on the electricity grid, has telephone lines and a few apartments boast air conditioning.

Essentially a 2,000-feddan patch of agricultural land with a population of 30,000, the island is not categorised as a residential area, and therefore is not subject to housing laws. Almost one year ago, landlords began negotiating the hike in rent prices with the low-income tenants. Prices were sometimes tripled, and contracts were limited to two years. Those who refused the deal were taken to court and a number of families have already packed and left.

Ahmed Abdel-Bassett, a researcher at the National Centre for Research, said that he paid LE3,000 in key money more than 10 years ago, and his rent was LE80 monthly. Now the landlord wants to raise the rent to more than double. "I thought that after all these years I can live comfortably," Abdel-Bassett said, "but now it seems my income will continue being hand to mouth." He added that his contract would be reviewed after two years, "which means another hike in the rent."

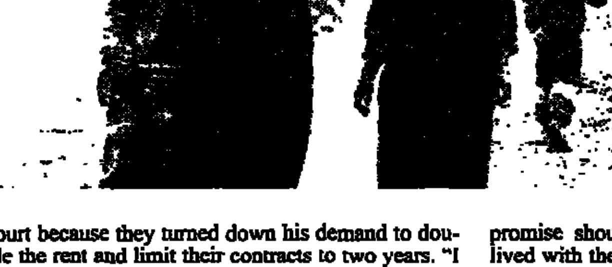
Like many, Abdel-Bassett and his neighbour Fat'hia Abdel-Aal have stood up to their landlord and were taken to court. For 10 years Fat'hia's rent was LE38 monthly. She is now being asked to pay LE80. Fat'hia tried to spearhead a campaign among the residents but was met with limited response.





Although residents must endure poor living conditions such as scarce drinking water, many like *Umm* Mohamed (right) adamantly refuse to go





"They should have told us when we came here that the island was not listed as a residential area," said one of Geziret El-Warraq's 30,000 residents

"We need to stand united in this problem," she said earnestly, "but each party has gone to a separate lawyer and is not willing to pay more for a lawyer to represent us all as one." She said she sent appeals for help to President Hosni Mubarak, Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri, and Giza Governor Abdel-Rehim Shehata.

The owner of their four-storey building resides in Saudi Arabia, but gave his brother Hosni Ramadan power of attorney to take three of the four tenants to court because they turned down his demand to double the rent and limit their contracts to two years. "I tried to convince them in many ways, but they absolutely refused," Ramadan said, adding that legal action was taken "only after the tenants remained stubborn and initiated a slanderous media campaign against my brother."

Ramadan admits that the new rent demanded by his brother initially was unreasonable — a minimum of LE100 — but he believes his own compromise should have been acceptable. "We have lived with these people for a long time," he said, "I understand how they feel, but landlords also want to make money." He added that the island appeals to many would-be residents who are willing to pay LE200 to LE250 in rent.

Another distressed tenant is Khaled Mustafa, a part-time microbus driver who moved into his flat eight years ago when the rent was LE60. His landlord is suing him because he refused to pay LE100, but Mustafa has appealed the eviction order. Mustafa is at a loss regarding what to do with his five-member family if the court upholds the eviction order. "I just want a roof over our head," he said. "I don't have anywhere else to go."

Although Governor Shehata visited Geziret El-Warraq last November and instructed landlords to halt the evictions and not raise rent prices, residents say the rate of evictions rose the next day. Hosni Ramadan, who had previously sympathised with the tenants, said that after the governor left, tenants "demonstrated in a very hostile manner against the landlords, which made us more headstrong." Another landlord said that the governor has no power over the owners, and they can do as they please with their property. "He's not the minister of justice," the landlord said. He added that even if the tenants appeal to the governor to classify the island as a residential area, and therefore subject to housing laws, "it is not up to him to change the law".

Fouad Abdel-Wahab, member of parliament for the Imbaba district where Geziret El-Warraq lies, said none of the tenants are being evicted. "Everything is on hold until we reach a compromise on a friendly basis," Abdel-Wahab said. He believes that the island should come under the jurisdiction of the housing laws to protect the tenants, denying the claim that Imbaba MPs are siding with the landlords because they are the ones who can muster votes in the constituency. "We do not differentiate between landlords and tenants," he said, even though most of the 3,000 island dwellers in his constituency are landlords.

Abdel-Wahab also revealed that there are plans to turn the island into a tourist attraction, connecting it to the mainland, upgrading living conditions and improving the scenery. This in turn means that almost all its inhabitants will be removed. "If that happens, it will be murder," said one of the residents.

When selecting who to evict first, landlords chose a few tenants in every building so as to avoid strong resistance, but Mamdouh Abdel-Samad knows his turn is coming. Three of Abdel-Samad's neighbours were ordered to leave their flats, but are appealing the eviction order. "When they are gone, the problem will land on my doorstep," he said. Abdel-Samad works at an air-conditioning company and pays *LE80* a month, but the landlord wants to make it a standard LE150 for all tenants with a time limit of two years.

"They should have told us when we came here that the island was not listed as a residential area," *he protested, "because no one knew that under civil* law the landlord has all the rights and the tenant has none."

The face of rage

Violence against women has taken on a new face and as **Sahar El-Bahr** discovers, the consequences are completely devastating

Sulphuric acid, also known as fire water, takes less than a minute to burn flesh. It can disintegrate a woman's skirt in a matter of seconds. If thrown on the face, the scars are life-long; often completely disfiguring.

This disfiguring factor has prompted some men to use this painful weapon as a means of violence against women. In recent years the trend has grown and media reports of horrifying incidents abound. Most accounts involve girls whose faces were splashed with sulphuric acid by the men they rejected.

Marwa Kamal's story follows such a scenario. Last week the 16-year-old girl finally saw justice served when a court sentenced the man who threw fire water on her face to 10 years in jail. Court proceedings took three years, during which time Kamal underwent 15 long and arduous operations to undo the damage done. One week before the sentence was handed down in court, Kamal appeared on the popular television show "Who is responsible?" and told the story of how her rejection of a marriage proposal sent her suitor into a violent rage. The result, explained Marwa, whose long hair tellingly covers the right side of her face, has been years of mental and physical torment.

Abeer Abdel-Rahman's story is slightly different. One day, the second-year Ain Shams University student leant against a parked car on the edge of the busy pedestrian walkway and paused for a moment to rest. Her reverie was suddenly shattered by an unbearable burning sensation on her legs. Abdel-Rahman's immediate thought was that there was an irritant on the vehicle. But then looking down she was shocked to see her skirt falling to pieces.

Embarrassed and puzzled, she made her way home to clean up and examine her wound. She didn't realise the seriousness of the injury until it worsened over the ensuing week. When the doctor she sought treatment from informed her the burn was caused by sulphuric acid, she was even more shocked.

Abdel-Rahman was just one of 50 known victims of 28-year-old Essam Meselhi, the married father of a young son. For reasons of her own she never reported the incident to the police.

"Only when a TV programme interviewed Meselhi asking him why he had committed these crimes did I grasp what had happened. I was shocked to realise that this man had followed me that day five months ago. Since then I have gone through extensive treatment," she said.

Meselhi's assaults were committed in broad daylight in crowded downtown streets. He later told authorities: "I hated my ex-fiancée; she refused to marry me, and whenever I felt the need to punish her, I would walk around downtown with a syringe full of sulphuric acid. I would wait until I spotted a woman who looked like her and spray acid on her back and legs. I'd then walk away among the crowds as if nothing had happened."

Ahmed El-Magdoub, professor at the National Centre for Sociological and Criminological Research, said that Meselhi, unable to directly confront his ex-fiancée, sought to avenge his injured pride on young women who bore a physical likeness to her.

The use of sulphuric acid, according to Amal Abdel-Hamid, a senior plastic surgeon at Ahmed Maher Educational Hospital, is most definitely on the rise: "In the last four years, I have seen 60 cases in which patients go blind. Nowadays, there is at least one case every week."

Sulphuric acid is a cheap chemical compound normally used for industrial purposes. One litre retails for LE4 and until recently it was abundantly available to the general public in many shops. Legally speaking sulphuric acid crimes are generally classified among offenses requiring punishment for physical damage.

Sociologists use such incidents as a measure of how violent society is against women. The motivations to commit such heinous crimes are many. El-Magdoub cites financial difficulties, which often lead to postponed marriage plans. He also mentions society's traditional son-preference as cause for giving men a sense of superiority. The feeling that a woman has somehow tipped the power scales may spur rage which can only be vented through violence.

Psychiatrist Mohamed Shaalan stated that the use of sulphuric acid is evidence of an inferno of rage brewing beneath the superficial layers of society. It shows, he says, severe aggression against women. Traditional gender segregation exacerbates the situation, he adds.

"These men think of refusal as an insult to their dignity and manhood. The families of these girls usually do not report these incidents to the police as they wish to avoid publicity," explains El-Magdoub.

Seventeen-year-old Nashwa spurned her assailant's marriage proposal on the grounds of their differing social and economic backgrounds. Her suitor's infatuation turned to rage and he plotted to take revenge. He waited for her by the stairs of her house to throw sulphuric acid on her face. The effects of his act were not just limited to Nashwa, who has been left physically and psychologically scarred. The financial and emotional toll on her family has been enormous.

"We are living in a nightmare. Just a little amount of fire water has ruined my daughter's pretty face," said Nashwa's father who spoke on condition of anonymity. He added bitterly that life for his daughter is a living hell while in the two years since the judicial process began her attacker has remained free on bail. "My daughter can't even bring herself to leave her room while the accused roams free," he said. The cost of Nashwa's treatment has exceeded LE7,000 and she still requires extensive medical attention.

"The treatment of burns is the most expensive of all medical procedures," explains Abdel-Hamid. "We first try to preserve the damaged areas, then treat the disfigurement which all in all requires a lot of effort and money. The patient needs constant follow-up and daily bandage changes."

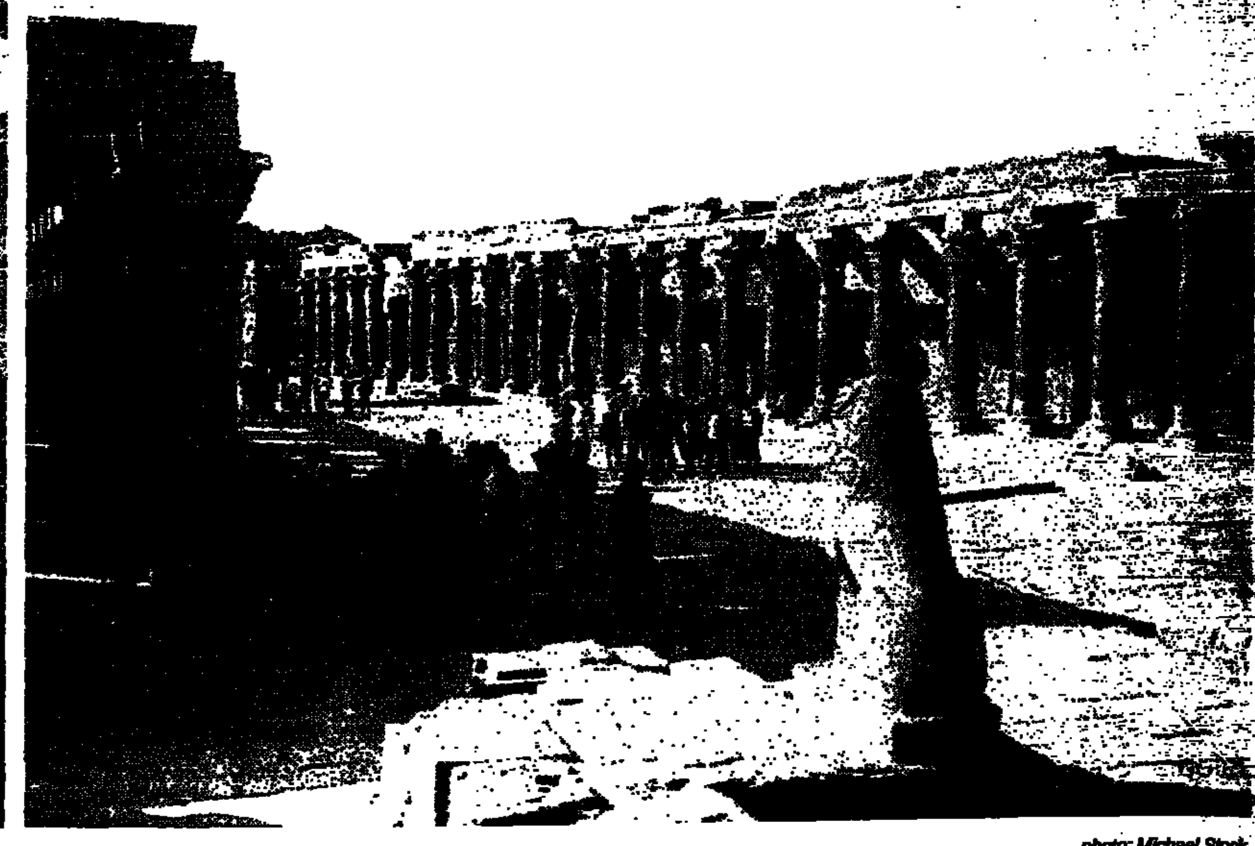
Law No 240 of the penal code lays down a punishment of three to five years in the case of an accidental acid burn resulting in the disfigurement of the nose, ear, or mouth and 5-10 years if it is a deliberate act, explained Mohamed Eid, deputy chief justice of the Court of Cessation.

Yehia El-Rifa'i, former president of the Judges' Club, however, protests that "Measures to prevent crimes before they are committed are weak." He advocates tougher laws.

Psychiatrist Shaalan says that stricter legislation is only part of the solution. A more comprehensive solution involves educational and media campaigns to counter violence against women.

In response to the growing number of acid attacks, the Ministry of Interior has issued a decree limiting the purchase of sulphuric acid to those submitting a request to the Public Security Authority defining the amount required and the purpose of its use. The request would then be referred to the Chemicals Authority for final approval.





Travelling on a Nile cruise is a unique experience. Some of the highlights include trips to Karnak, Aswan and Philae

photo: Michael Stock

Vying for the Nile

Floating hotels are still running aground despite assurances that the problem would be solved by the '96-97 winter season. **Sherine Nasr** investigates a new proposal and travels with a group of tourists on a cruise

Nile water is precious and vital to agriculture. It is also the watery highway for cruise ships. Presently, the ministries of tourism and agriculture are hammering out a blueprint regarding the regulation of this critical resource.

The ambitious proposal, being studied by these ministries along with those of public works and water resources and health, as well as the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency and the River Transportation Authority, calls for a control system along the Nile. It aims to reduce the chances of cruise ships running aground during the winter season when tourism is at its peak and the Nile's water level is kept low for agricultural development.

The proposal, among other things, suggests earmarking certain lanes in the river specifically for cruise ship navigation. "A major step would be to place guidance signs along the navigational route, provide lights on both banks of the river at night and establish a unit where radar could determine the number of the boats passing along the lane at any given time," said Zeinab El-Maghrabi, head of the Waterways Maintenance Department (WMD).

The plan has been described as vital by Nagui Erian, an operator in the Nile cruise business since the 1960s. "It will undoubtedly solve the persisting problems that face floating hotels at this time of year."

This season, in December alone, more than 11 vessels ran aground in different areas of Upper Egypt. "There are some 300 floating hotels cruising the Nile during the peak season," said Erian. "Their customers pay for first-class accommodations, and it is important that they enjoy their sightseeing programme without being interrupted by an accident of this sort."

Many governorates in Upper Egypt depend on Nile cruises as their primary source of revenue. "Tourists constitute nearly 80 per cent of the visitors here," said Salwa El-Serougi, head of the tourism department in Minya.

Abdel-Wahab Ghazi, head of the Irrigation Authority, is not surprised that large vessels run aground at this time of year, because significantly less water is released through the Aswan High Dam during the "winter closure" than at any other period. "Not only do crops need less water in the winter, but it is also the only time to wash out subwaterways," he explained. As a result of modern technology, he said, greater control of the river is possible and the winter closure has been reduced from 40 to 15 days.

Although extra water was released to help float the boats, Ghazi believes that this is not an ideal way to solve the problem. "Water is extremely precious. It is unreasonable to waste large amounts to float a ship; tourists could continue their trip using other means of transportation."

"But this is not what the Nile cruise is all about," said Erian, "Travellers pay more for this trip than for a five-star hotel." He stressed that the inconvenience to tourists cannot be underestimated. "When the visiting schedules are upset, travellers become worried."

Steve Nimr, who went on a Nile cruise from Luxor to Aswan, said that his ship got stuck three times. "The first time it took five minutes to start moving. The other two times it was a quarter of an hour before we could resume our journey." Nimr noted that the navigational route was very narrow and the ship had to proceed slowly. "We had to stop for hours to allow ships from the other direction to pass."

Generally speaking, when efforts fail to float a vessel quickly, it is the shipping company's responsibility to continue the programme by providing transportation and accommodation for the tourists. "This, however, is poor compensation," Erian lamented.

There are certain areas along the Nile which are recognised as navigational hazards. "Approaching Assuit, Beni Suef and the area between Kom Ombo and Edfu, ships must be very careful," Erian said. There are two main spots through which the pilot has to be doubly careful. One is a sandbank, which actually hindered navigation for two days last December, between the east and west bank at Luxor. The other is the Assiut lock, where the depth during the winter closure reaches a mere 1.1m, while some ships' draughts are almost 1.5m. "The project under consideration suggests establishing a new lock to accommodate bigger ships," said Ghazi. A cruise ship passes through three locks: Assiut, Nag Hammadi and Esna. A quarterly bulletin detailing the depth of the locks is distributed to the owners of the floating hotels.

Some have requested that a lane be deepened or a sandbank removed, "but this could be detrimental to the Nile's health," said WMD's El-Maghrabi, who added that the Nile Research Institute is studying the central navigational route to determine which part to enlarge. "Each island is there for a purpose and we cannot defy nature."

According to Erian, neither the winter closure nor the sandbanks are the reasons why so many floating hotels run aground. "These difficulties have existed since the '60s when such vessels sailed the Nile for the first time and we are experienced in dealing with them," he claimed, blaming "inexperienced" floating hotels' owners for "aggravating the situation". "The main concern of such owners is to attract tourists by making their ships as luxurious as possible. Some even increase the number of cabins to increase their profit. Unsuitable construction material is often used, and the measurements of the ship are miscalculated. The final product is incompatible with the Nile's specific navigation conditions recognised by the more prestigious chains of floating hotels."

The building of a Nile cruiser, El-Maghrabi explained, is the responsibility of the owner. Yet, the vessel has to be checked and approved by the ministries of tourism and public works. The River Transportation Authority also specifies that the ship should be granted a certificate by one of the internationally-known consultant groups.

Of course, the running aground of a floating hotel could be the fault of an inexperienced pilot. "There are not enough skilled pilots to service all the floating hotels," said Erian. A good pilot, theoretically, is one who knows the navigational channel by heart. "But this is not enough. These boats lack modern technology. The pilot is not infallible. If he loses concentration for a few minutes, the ship could easily mount a sandbank or crash into a rock."

Strict control of Nile cruises, establishing specific river lanes and ensuring safety with the aid of radar will do much to solve this perennial problem. It is important to do so, because sailing up or down the Nile on a cruise ship is still regarded as the most rewarding and romantic way to see the cities and monuments of the pharaohs.

Cruising for fun and knowledge

SINCE the early '60s, Nile cruises have provided travellers with a fun way to view history. Recent incidents, in which a number of ships went aground, do not seem to have dampened the ardour or reduced the number of people willing to explore the treasures of the Nile. "There have been no cancellations, and the number of travellers is as it should be for this time of year," said Hassan El-Shafie, head of the Sheraton's Nile cruises.

Not only is the trip special in the vast range of rural scenery it opens up but, according to El-Shafie, it also attracts a particular type of traveller: "They are usually middle-aged, cultured people who are more willing to learn about the country they are visiting than simply spend time in idle relaxation."

A standard Nile cruise sails from Aswan to Luxor or vice versa over three nights. Tourists are required to wake up early to enjoy the sights of the temples in the early morning light. The ship stops in Kom Ombo, Edfu and Esna before finally docking in Luxor or Aswan.

In Aswan, our ship anchored on the east bank, allowing us to begin our journey with a felluca ride around Elephantine Island. The island, an important landmark throughout the ages, was given its name during the Graeco-Roman era. "The name has given rise to many interpretations," said Hassan Khalil, our tour guide, who suggested that the island may have once been a centre for selling elephant tusks. With a little imagination, some rocks on the island look like elephants.

Graffiti is abundant on the rocks of the island. "These rock inscriptions were written in ancient times in hieroglyphics and demotic. Some are historical records and others simply record a visit to the island," Khalil explained.

We were then shown the ancient Nilometer, which was restored by Khedive Ismail in 1870. It was constructed to register the water levels of the Nile.

Looking toward the west bank, the rock tombs of Kubbet El-Hawa, where the noblemen of Elephantine were buried, and Kitchner's Island, or the Botanical Island, as it is more popularly known, are easily recognised. Kitchner's Island is renowned for its large collection of plants and trees, imported by Lord Kitchner from all over the world. The Fatimid-style, single dome mausoleum of Aga Khan, the leader of the Ismaili community, a sect of Islam, is also visible.

The beauty of the Nile at this spot is marred by a huge, ugly, modern building which is still under construction. "This was meant to be an extension of the Oberoi Hotel," commented Khalil, explaining that construction has been stopped by President Mubarak. The Oberoi Hotel was much criticised when it opened in the early 1960s. "Experts warned that Aswan should maintain its simple aura and that it would be unwise to turn it into a big city. The Oberoi was among the first buildings to violate that concept."

Next we took a motorboat to Philae Temple, which was dedicated to Isis. The earliest parts of the temple were built by Ptolemy II. Our guide told us that the Ptolemies, the heirs of Alexander the Great, constructed temples for the gods and goddesses to please the Egyptians they governed.

The temple was threatened when Aswan's first dam was built at the turn of the century. It was partly submerged in water, and small boats could sail beneath the architraves. Fortunately, silt accumulated around its walls and protected them from damage. It was not until the '70s that UNESCO dismantled and reconstructed the monuments on the nearby island of Agilika.

We found that among the most interesting sites to visit on Aswan's east bank were the famous granite quarries, the Ancient Egyptians' main source of granite. The "unfinished obelisk" still lies in the quarry. Due to some flaws in the stone, it was never completed. Except for the workers' marks, there is no telling to whom it belonged or at what age it was quarried. The "unfinished obelisk" raises questions on how Ancient Egyptians managed to cut, transport, and later erect these huge blocks of granite. "Had it been completed, it would have been higher than the Hatshepsut's obelisk at Karnak," said our guide.

As our ship sailed north, it came to Kom Ombo Temple, standing on the very edge of the Nile. This temple is unique because it is dedicated to two deities: Horus the hawk and Sobek the crocodile. Sarcophagai of mummified crocodiles were discovered near the building, some of which are displayed in one of the temple's rooms.

The journey continued smoothly and we were able to relax and enjoy the sight of deep green palm trees growing along the banks of the Nile, against a background of ochre sand dunes.

Edfu was the next port of call. Here we saw one of Egypt's most well-preserved temples, dedicated to the hawk-headed Horus. The art and architecture in the temple are perhaps the best from the Ptolemaic period. A large granite statue of Horus guards the entrance of the temple, which is covered with inscriptions. The most significant is one depicting the symbolic conflict between "good" Horus and "evil" Set.

At Esna, we visited the Temple of Khnum, the ram-headed god to whom many offerings were given as shown in the detailed reliefs.

Our journey ended in Luxor, where we visited two of Egypt's most famous temples — Luxor and Karnak.

Karnak can hardly be described as one temple. It actually contains the remnants of 29 individual temples, most of which were built in honour of Amun-Re. The entrance is flanked, on both sides, by ram-headed statues. Among the many monuments described by our guide, we were most impressed with the Sacred Lake, where the priests of Amon conducted religious "purification" rites, and the obelisk of Hatshepsut.

Everyone was sorry that the cruise had to end. "I have read about Ancient Egyptian history, but nothing could have prepared me for the glorious monuments I have seen. It is hard to take in all of them in only one trip," said the American, Hadley.

This trip was made possible by Sheraton Nile Cruises

Go get the Spaniards

Representatives from the Ministry of Tourism attended a travel conference in Spain for the first time, seeking to bolster Spanish tourism in Egypt. **Rehab Saad** reports

"Restoring the Spanish market" was the theme of Egyptian participation in the Fitur tourism exhibition held recently in Spain. "We decided to consider 1997 the year of Spain. We are going to set up a plan for our tourism office in Madrid to attract as many Spaniards as possible," said Mamdouh El-Beltagui, the minister of tourism.

Beltagui revealed that the Spanish market is lagging behind other European markets with regard to the number of tourists travelling to Egypt.

Statistics show that Spanish tourism in Egypt reached its peak in 1992, when 84,172 Spaniards visited. The number then sharply declined to 22,114 in 1993 and reached an all-time low in 1994 with only 14,650 tourists. The numbers increased slightly in '95 and '96 with 23,848 and 27,489 visitors respectively.

On the other hand, the number of tourists from other European countries, including Germany, Italy, Britain and France, rose continuously as a result of promotional strategies implemented in these nations.

"Thus, there should be a renewed effort to restore the Spanish market, and dispel the fear of travelling to Egypt. Our first step was to participate in the important Fitur exhibition," Beltagui said.

The Fitur exhibition is considered the second largest in Europe, after the annual ITB exhibition in Berlin. Egypt used to participate with a modest pavilion and a limited delegation. This year, however, Egypt erected a huge pavilion on 250 metres, which included representatives from 10 hotels and nine travel agencies. Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism headed the delegation for the first time.

This year, approximately 10,300 exhibitors from 164 countries displayed their products, which included tour operators, travel agents, airlines, transportation agents, tourist organisations, environmental associations, education and tourism training institutes.

"The aim of our participation is to encourage Spanish tour operators to include Egypt in their programmes and to support the marketing efforts of the private sector," Beltagui said, explaining that one of the most important reasons for participation was to promote the concept of investment partnership and to explain the guarantees and advantages of investing in Egypt. "Furthermore, we are studying the possibility of attracting tourists from Latin American countries through Spain," Beltagui said.

One of the most important meetings took place between the minister of tourism and Spanish airline officials, particularly Iberian Airlines (regular flights) and SpainAir (charter flights) to discuss the possibility of increasing transportation between the two countries. In that meeting, the liberal rules governing charter operations in Egypt were discussed.

Egypt's participation in the Fitur exhibition resulted in attracting four Spanish conferences to Egypt: the Spanish Travel Agents Union, the Union of Spanish Tour Operators, the Union of Spanish Travel Writers and the Union of the Travel Writers of Catalonia will all hold their annual conferences in the land of the pharaohs this year.

How to get there

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matruh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North/South Sinai
Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.
Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Qusseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410

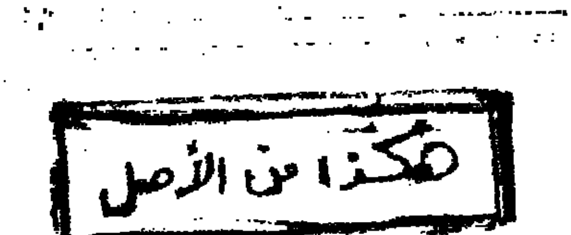
Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Compiled by **Rehab Saad**



هكذا من الأصل

Egypt draws in Addis

It didn't add up in Addis Ababa as against all expectations, Ethiopia forced Egypt to a 1-1 draw in one of the African Nations Cup qualifying matches played last weekend in various cities. **Eric Asomugha** reports

The final result in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, was an unwelcome surprise for Egypt in the Group III African Nations Cup qualifying match played last Sunday. Like a bridegroom going to collect a bride reputed to be lovely only to find all reports greatly exaggerated, Egypt limped home with a 1-1 draw against under-dog Ethiopia.

Egypt, one of the super-powers of African soccer and currently cup holders of two of the three African club competitions, played far from its best at this crucial stage of the competition.

Perhaps the fact that they went in as the favourites — Ethiopia is no force in African soccer — gave Egypt the confidence to, on that day at least, write cheques, their talent couldn't cash. In its last appearance in Nations Cup finals at Côte d'Ivoire in 1984, Ethiopia lost three straight matches; one each to Nigeria 3-0, Algeria 2-0 and Zambia 1-0. And Ethiopia's Nations Cup campaign was assumed to be shattered when 16 of its players sought political asylum in Italy before the canceled match against Morocco in January. More importantly a make-shift team studded with junior players was reportedly assembled just ten days prior to the Egypt-Ethiopia encounter.

What makes Egypt's lacklustre performance even more unfathomable, is that a win in Ethiopia would have pushed Egypt to the top place. Completely untypical of the Egyptian style we have come to expect, the encounter was slow-paced and inconsistent. Goal poachers Hossam Hassan and Ahmed Kass were lost in a morass of indecision and the import of the two Europe-based players, Hysam Farouk of Holland's Feyernord Rotterdam and Germany's Hansa Rostock's Yasser Radwan, did little to strengthen the team.

The Ethiopians, never under apparent threat, were *instilled with confidence and took control with* commendable passes and co-ordination with the support of aceman Elias Gohar. Luckily for Egypt, lack of experience and poor goal shots were their weak point. Three corner kicks in the first half were completely wasted. Despite this Akram Abdel-Meguid's 35th minute off target heading was Egypt's closest in the entire half.

It wasn't until the 13th minute of second half, when the unmarked Aseyed Tesfaye slammed in a good cross from the right to put Ethiopia ahead, did the game hot up.

Desperate for an equaliser, Egyptian coach Farouk Gafaar brought in Walid Salaheddin to replace Akram Abdel-Meguid in the 19th minute. Quite a good decision. Walid, who gave a good account of himself, was brought down just metres from the box. Mahmoud Abdel-Dahab took the free kick, and Tarek Mustafa in his usual fashion came from behind to score the rebound for the equaliser in the 26th minute.

But for Egypt that was as far as it got. All efforts for a winning goal were repelled by the impenetrable Ethiopian defense and the game ended in a 1-1 draw.

Meanwhile in the other Group III match, Senegal remains on top with five points from three matches after Sunday's goalless home draw with Morocco. Senegal has drawn two home matches and won one away game in Ethiopia. But the real acid test for the team will be the two return legs in Egypt and Morocco *in July*.

In Group I, Zimbabwe defeated Angola 1-0 in a home match in Harare in their Group I encounter. But since they are the only two teams to be grouped together in both the Nations Cup and World Cup qualifier, they have three more meets to settle their differences. Conventional wisdom holds that whether Zimbabwe is likely to secure its first ever Nations Cup ticket depends on coach Bruce Grobbelaar who has now managed two wins and a draw. Ghana remains at the top of the group which is now reduced to three following the withdrawal of Sudan.

Former African champions Côte d'Ivoire, struggling to restore their image, snatched a valuable three points after defeating Mali 2-1 at Bamako in Group II. At home, Benin forced Algeria to a 1-1 draw to earn their first point in the race. Benin is still occupying the bottom place.

What was expected to be a baptism of fire for Sierra Leone, playing in Group IV, in Conakry, turned into washout. The team suffered a narrow 1-0 defeat at the hands of Guinea who now top the group with six points ahead of Tunisia trailing with three. *Lacking any points whatsoever*, Sierra Leone stands no chance of placing in the group even though Central African Republic has withdrawn.

Topping Group V with five points, Cameroon is determined to erase their disappointing performance in recent years. They hope to expunge their failure to qualify for the 1994 Nations Cup, the humiliating 6-1 defeat by Russia at the 1994 World Cup and the 3-0 drubbing by South Africa in the opening match of 1996 Nations Cup.

In Group VI, the small West African country of Togo continues to hold onto their surprise lead. Togo played a 1-1 draw with Zaire in Lome to solidify their two point lead over Zaire's five. In an away match in Dar Es Salaam, Liberia drew 1-1 with Tanzania. As for Liberia, with two tough matches to be played against Zaire and Togo, the chances of their making it to Nations Cup seem very slim.

Malawi's 2-0 defeat of Mozambique in Group VII restored confidence among home supporters after their crushing defeat to group leaders Zambia last month at Blantyre. In a home match in Port-Louis, *Mauritius played a goaless draw with Zambia to* earn their first point.

Group winners and runners-up in the race to the 21st African Cup of Nations, which ends in July, will join host Burkina Faso and defending champions South Africa for the finals from February 7-28, 1998.



Egypt holds on to second place by the skill of their teeth throughout the African Nations Cup

photo: Abdel-Wehab El-Sehiti

Group 3 standings

Country	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal	3	1	2	-	2	1	5
Egypt	3	-	3	-	2	2	3
Morocco	2	-	2	-	1	1	2
Ethiopia	2	-	1	1	2	3	1

Russia takes Norway gold

THE SIX time Olympic gold medal winner Ljubova Egorova of Russia made her individual world title debut in the 5km women's World Championship cross-country classic in Norway last Sunday. Egorova, clocking in at 13 minutes 29.9 secs, squeaked ahead of compatriot Elena Vaelbe's time of 13:31:7 while Italy's Stefania Belmondo rounded out the top three spots with 13:35:00.

The 30-year-old Egorova took advantage of her superior rhythm in contrast to Vaelbe's faster action to nab the trophy. Vaelbe, who won the 15km freestyle last Friday, commenting on the fact that five of the first six positions were filled by Russians said the team would celebrate in style.

Vive la France

FRANCE'S Luc Alphand risked all to attain his 12th World Cup win in three years last Saturday. The Frenchman nabbed his fourth World Cup downhill title this season just one day after winning the Super-G with a time of 1 minute 54.27 seconds. The 31-year-old Alphand, who stands poised to seal his third successive World Cup downhill series, would become the first Frenchman to win the overall title since Jean-Claude Killy in 1968.

Pietro Vitalini of Italy took second place with 1 minute 54.85 seconds and his teammate Kristian Ghedina, second to Alphand in the downhill standings, came in third with 1 minute 54.86 seconds.

Turkish delight

BULGARIA just can't seem to keep it's home-bred world champions from fleeing the roost. The 26-year-old boxer Serafim Todorov, an ethnic Turk, is the latest high profile sport figure to seek greener pastures abroad. The 125-pound (57kg) Todorov, the winner of four European championships and a silver medalist in the 1996 Atlanta Games, is the third world champion athlete of Turkish origin to seek asylum in Turkey.

World champion weightlifter Naim Suleymanoglu, the "Pocket Hercules", has become Turkey's biggest delight since his defection in 1986. Suleymanoglu has since won a record three Olympic gold-medals during his career. He was followed by world-champion weightlifter, Hafiz Suleymanov who defected in 1989.

Jewish athletes honoured

A 47-YEAR-old dispute was resolved when officials in the Berlin suburb of Charlottenburg opted to rename a street in the city's Olympic quarter after two Jewish athletes. The Reichssportfeldstrasse (Imperial-sportsfield Street) is now to be known as Flatow-allee, honouring Gustav Felix Flatow and his cousin Alfred.

The pair competed in the gymnastic event at the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 in which Alfred won the gold medal. The two were later persecuted by Hitler's *National Socialists and sent to a Nazi* concentration camp where Alfred died in December 1942. Gustav survived the war but died shortly after of malnutrition. Plans to rename the street had been mooted since 1950, but a group of 360 residents signed a petition opposing the change. A Berlin court recently acted to dismiss the legal petition.

Vaunted vault

EMMA George of Australia broke her own women's pole vault world record with a clearance of 4.55m last week at the Melbourne Grand Prix track and field meet at the Olympic Park. George, 22, bettered her mark of 4.50m set earlier this month at the Victorian state championships with her third jump of the night. The Australian set her 10th world record — eight indoors and two outdoors — but failed in three attempts at 4.65m.

Graf the ambassador

STEFFI Graf, by way of showing her concern for animals, has signed on as an ambassador for the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). The WWF has launched a high profile campaign to encourage governments, industry and ordinary people to *protect endangered species through* awareness and action.

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

Algerian conquest

WITH the release of the International Athletics Federation annual roster of the best athletes world-wide Algeria can boast of having nine athletes among the top fifty.

Sprinter Nour El-Din Morcelli was selected in the number one spot in his sport for his winning 3:48:15 min time in the mile event, his 4:49:55 min victory in the 2,000m and second place in 1500m event with 3:29:50 min.

Three other Algerian sprinters secured a spot on the list in the 3,000m event. Yehia Azayeg came in 41st place, Reda ben Zein in 44th and Eissa Balout rounded out the trio in 49th place. Zein and Balout also secured 37th place and 36th place consecutively in the 5000m event.

Abdel-Rahman Da'as gained 38th place in the 3000m hurdles and in the 800m event Adam Hussein achieved 28th place. In the marathon, Ali Sakhri attained 39th place. Hassiba Boulmarka gained 23rd place in the 1500m event with 4:5:87 min and Nourn Marah took the 48th place in the 800m event with 2:01:43 min.



The Algerian famous sprinter, Nour El-Din *Morcelli*

Running on empty

THE KNOWLEDGE that time is running out has prompted the Egyptian Tae Kwon Do Federation to redouble efforts to raise money for the 1997 World Cup reports Eman Abdel El-Moeti. Although the tournament, to be hosted at the Ahli Club from 6-8 March, is expected to attract participants from 22 *countries the federation* may be headed for disaster if they fail to come up with sufficient funds to cover expenses. "We need LE400,000 to cover all the expenses," said Amr Khairy, manager of the *federation*. "But unfortunately, we have only received LE100,000 from the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS)."

Egypt has gained a respectable reputation for hosting and organising Arab, African and international tae kwon do championships in the past. The prime result of this recognition was Egypt's winning bid to host the World Cup against contenders France and Denmark.

For reasons unknown to the federation there has been a decided lack of response to federation requests for sponsorship from the business community. At a press conference last week, federation officials renewed requests for more funding from the SCYS and business men interested in sponsoring sports events to no avail.

To date, 16 countries have confirmed their intention of competing in the tournament which will host the South Korean team in a demonstration performance at the opening ceremonies to be broadcast live on Egyptian television.

Abdel-Aziz Hegazi:

Capricorn rising

Starting out as a professor of accounting, he became one of the major executors of transformation policies, from socialism to open door

The wood-paneled room with its long seminar table and comfortable leather armchairs is suggestive of work, despite its casual atmosphere. Here, he works and receives visitors, preferring the relative intimacy of this den to the formality of his desk.

His office is his universe, where he devotes himself to his two passions: his accounting practice, established in the early '50s, and the activities attendant upon his position as an eminently public person, the head of a number of financial and social institutions.

His interests now embrace the wider realms of economy and politics. He recently headed a conference on Arab-European partnership, and will travel to Amman soon to attend a conference on challenges to the success of peace in the Middle East.

He is a handsome man, at 75, his hair that distinguished shade of silvery white so sought after by actors portraying successful public personalities and businessmen.

He was minister of the treasury under Nasser during the War of Attrition, deputy prime minister under Sadat during the October War and, prime minister when the open door policy was launched — one of the few to achieve continuity under successive regimes, and very different policies.

As a university professor who pushed the very traditional science of accounting into the broader realms of macro-economics, he was solicited by the socialist government during the industrialisation drive of the early '60s because of his expertise in developing financial and administrative structures, but he did not become outdated with the passing of time: his expertise was solicited again in the mid-seventies.

Today, notwithstanding his wide circle of contacts and his influence, he no longer sees himself as "part of the circle of wielding political power": he feels like an outsider; his views on the economy do not go down well with the media, are "contrary to the general mood".

This, after all, is understandable. He is reluctant to jubilate. He is "not happy with the way the stock market is going, the unnatural rise in share prices, the speculation..." He warns against the "prestigious sounding mega-projects in the Sinai and the South Delta Valley. History has shown us failures before, when projects were launched without sufficient preparation or funding."

He is sympathetic to Nasser's efforts to Egyptianise the economy, and recognises the merits of planned economic action. He believes attacks against the public sector to be unwarranted. "It is the socialist era," he says, "which gave Egypt the resources for industrialisation and for the October War."

Abdel-Aziz Hegazi has studied the economy of belligerence extensively, and sees war as having been a pivotal point in Egypt's economy, from the Tripartite Aggression of 1956 until the October War. He was minister of the treasury in 1968, during the War of Attrition, chosen as part of a group of professionals and academicians who offered their expertise in civil organisation of government. He participated in the formulation of the 30 March declaration, which he calls "the first real fiscal and economic reform aimed at upgrading the armed forces." The economy was directed to solicit funding from the Arab countries and international agencies, in an attempt to break free from the Soviet economic and military monopoly. Hegazi was a key figure in the committee formed to reform of the public sector and government apparatus at the time.

A few months before the October War, he was appointed deputy prime minister for financial, economic and external trade affairs. A panel was formed to prepare for increased liberalisation.

The committee headed by the then vice-president, Mahmoud Fawzi, and included Abdel-Moneim El-Qaysouni, Nazmi Abdel-Hamid, and Ismail Sabri Abdallah. "A course was charted revising previous investment laws, with the aim of legal reform, consolidating relations with foreign financial institutions, and raising government and public sector efficiency. Attracting Arab investment capital was also a goal: all of this upgraded the economy in preparation for the war."

He also played a part, however, in the execution of the radical transformation in economic policy in 1974 towards economic liberalisation, setting up what he describes as "its scientific, political, economic and administrative framework". Nevertheless, he never had the chance to oversee its implementation "because of political developments, and others who came instead, capable of accepting blind orders."

Because he was prime minister, the man in charge of execution, when the economic open door policy was launched, he has been dubbed the "architect of the open door". He bears both credit and blame, most often the latter, for the consequences of what has been described as an unrestrained and overly hasty programme of liberalisation.

He takes the criticism with equilibrium, with the mindset of the technocrat — he is very much the dispassionate university professor, not the man of strong political convictions.

"What I call the 'early open door' was a policy devised by Nasser in 1968, because he wanted to break free from the Soviets, the defeat of 1967 and the general demand for radical political, legislative and administrative change. So the declaration of March 30 was made, setting the framework for financial and economic reform, in the direction of liberalisation."

Hegazi, appointed prime minister in September 1974, was in office when Investment Law No. 43, popularly known as the open door law was issued. He left office in April 1975. "The open door policy did not bear the foreseen fruits because things were not executed the way they were planned. I was no longer in office when the law was implemented. But it was aborted by political events, by the food riots of 1977, and the Arab boycott following Sadat's peace initiative with Israel. There was also the burden of debt repayment to the IMF and the World Bank. Ultimately, we *do* have a problem with the system, the fact that policies depend on individuals, and change erratically, rather than on individuals following consistent policies."

Hardly more than ten minutes pass without interruption from his staff, phone calls, or a visitor from overseas — the former governor of a central bank in one of the Gulf states, say. Hegazi played a major role in forging links with the Gulf states in the mid-seventies.

In a side-room at the office a small task-force is at work, keeping abreast "with the hot issues, globalisation, the European partnership, peace with Israel". He wants to write a book, a study of "Egypt's political and economic development since 1952, and where we are going, nothing too academic, its focal points being the state budgets of 1882 and 1952; a study relevant to Third World countries."

He was born in 1923, in Sharqiya, into a family of 'educationalists'. Working as a tax officer on his graduation from the Faculty of Commerce, he obtained his Ph.D. in commerce, accounting and management from Birmingham University in 1951, and came back to teach that same year at Cairo University, moving to Ain Shams in 1967. Along with Hussein Sherif, he was the first Egyptian to study cost accounting, and obtain a Ph.D. in accounting and management, while on scholarship in England.

When he came back to Egypt, he fought for cost accounting to be placed on equal footing with other disciplines and established as a degree. He founded the Syndicate of Commerce against the will of the Bar Association, and created a school of accounting to which he refers as the 'Hegazi School', and which focuses primarily on macro-economic concerns and the effects of fiscal systems and administration on the economy.

He undertook the very first study of the evolution of administrative structures, starting with the inception of the modern Egyptian state in the 19th century.

At university, from 1968 to 1973, he supervised a research centre devoted to studying the economy of war, and began the first study of Egypt's taxation system. He has also been interested in educational structures and employment. Long years in academia have trained him in coherence. Sadat once described him as a man who, where figures and planning were involved, had "computer-like" precision.

In a lounge outside the seminar room is another set of plush armchairs, another wood-paneled room where rows of pictures hang sedately on the walls: Hegazi with Nasser and Sadat, with Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, back in the sixties, with the Shah. Next to this array is an honorary certificate signed by Gorbachev. On the wall facing, Hegazi with King Faisal, King Fahd and the Emir of Kuwait.

He describes himself as generally liberal in formation, "having studied in post-war England at the time of socialist transformation." Yet in matters related to the economy he seems to have leaned to the right.

He played a major role in the establishment of Islamic banks, and is a strong advocate of the 'Islamic economy'. Criticism of Islamic banks annoys him intensely. "Why, after 25 years, should all this start? Citibank itself opened an Islamic branch. People should be left to make a choice where they want to invest their money," he exclaims.

He also shrugs off criticism of the Bank for the Poor, which he is currently involved in founding, solicited once again for his previous experience in founding the Nasser Social Bank. He ponders a counter-campaign to promote the bank. "We need an economic fund, not a social fund. Why not have an economically viable institution, one which does not depend on aid, directed to the dispossessed, most of whom, by the way, are women?"

Despite the strict demeanour which never left him as a professor he is not always very serious. His family life, one feels, is a bulwark: he married a student of his from university after a brief romance; his three sons all follow in their father's professional footsteps.

Having devoted most of his life to numbers, statistics, policy and plans, he now has more time for new interests. He recently became head of the Egyptian Cultural Club. He will tend to it, of course, with the same seriousness and precision he evinced as head of public financial institutions.

His work in government gave him a different vision, "the chance to go beyond narrow specialisation to the broad economy". It gave political insight as well, but he has always loved his university career best.

Like many who became involved in politics, however, he has been criticised for the policies implemented regardless of changes in context. He has often been described as aggressive in promoting his views and defending his interests; for this reason, and because he is eminently competent, he is regarded as the spokesman for the accounting profession, even by those who are reserved in their affection for him. He is a typical Capricorn, says a close friend, who, once he undertakes a project, is rarely shaken by criticism. A man whose sense of personal integrity is strong, he has been uncompromising in his loyalty to his knowledge.

*Profile by **Aziza Sami***

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris



♥ Darlings, I was so very busy last week that one important event just slipped my mind. And what an event! His Majesty **King Juan Carlos** and Her Majesty **Queen Sophia of Spain** attended the inauguration of the Spanish Cultural Centre Library in Cairo. The royal couple really looked so... well, regal. During the ceremony I suddenly thought how nice the phrase "Her Majesty, Queen Sosostris", would sound.

♣ Not being able to sign my name **Queen Sos** (for short), I contented myself with belting out our alma mater's song, "We of AUC", clapping along merrily with the rest of them in honour of the 1996-97 Mid-year Commencement. And what a commencement this was! Miraculously, every set of parents went home with their own graduate at the end, having been exposed to a deadly crowd hug before they could reach their own flesh and blood. Imagine! Over 370 Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science candidates, and 72 MA and MSc candidates, complete with parents, friends and relations, to say nothing of AUC faculty and staff, filled the Cairo International Conference Centre to capacity, and perhaps a little beyond. The university was honouring Dr **Richard F Pedersen** with an honorary doctorate for services rendered to AUC during the years 1978-1990 when he was its president. On my way out, I just had time to glimpse our own **Pascale Ghazaleh** hugging her Master's degree before we were both irremediably swallowed by the crowd.

Pascale

♦ Really, dears, with all these new academics on the loose, I felt almost overwhelmed. I was about to enrol for yet another honorary doctorate when **Laila Jayyusi** momentarily sidetracked me with her invitation to attend the Cairo International Model United Nations Conference, taking place on the AUC campus, as it has for the past nine years, and which is due to start on 4 March. CIMUN is flying 100 young delegates in for the event from all over the world. They will take part in six simulated councils. Laila wanted me to chair every one of them but I had to say a firm no, for fear of spreading myself too thin (although the evil tongues amongst you would consider that a remote possibilty).

♠ Do you know what the ISO certification is, dears? Well, don't you worry, neither do I really, but it is sort of quality recognition, I'm told. Anyway, ISO 9002 was achieved by the Mövenpick Resort Jolie Ville Cairo and its General Manager **Alaa Abdel-Hamid** says that it is the first step to the search for total quality. Let him search, I for one, achieved it long ago.